Dissent

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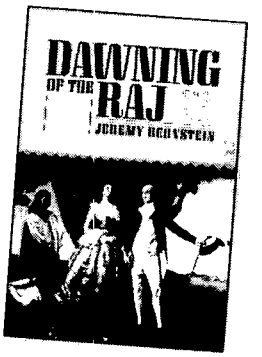
JEREMY BERNSTEIN

Dawning of the Raj



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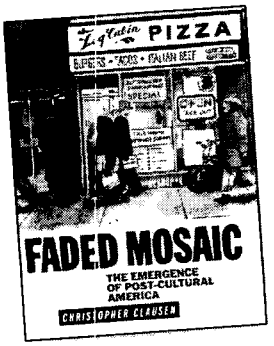

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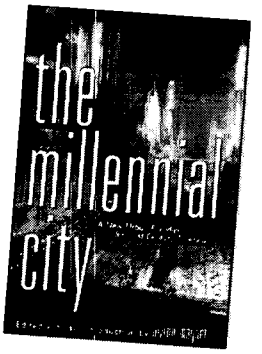
The Millennial City



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Editor's Page

When Americans tune inward, what do they hear in "globalizing" times? All too often that "the market" is the solution—whatever the trouble. It's reminiscent of bad Marxism. Remember the advanced theorists who insisted: nationalize the means of production, all problems dissolve—even those with little to do with production? ■ Smarter people on the left always abjured such nostrums, even accepting that markets could be useful. Just not as life's moral masters. It's still a cogent conviction. Yet now it must be pressed against different quarters, where markets are deemed to be patriotic, consumerism interchangeable with citizenship, and social pain the fault of anyone enduring it. Such views are contested in the "Arguing America" section of this issue of *Dissent*. Here are three examples. ■ Proponents of school vouchers say, "Let parents choose their children's education." Sounds simple. But then Amy Gutmann poses some questions: What terms should shape education policy—those of consumers on the market or those of public purpose and democratic citizenship? Should we subsidize private schools that practice "racial, religious or gender" discrimination? Will vouchers secure good schools for all the poor or equal public funding of private and public schools, effectively subsidizing the well-to-do? If it is unfair for poor kids to suffer bad schools, is it fair for them to suffer "bad neighborhoods" because their parents lack decent-paying work with child care and health insurance? Which leads to Gutmann's weightier query: are troubled schools the result of "public control," supposedly remedied by privatization, or of politics, calling out for serious reform? ■ Iris Young scrutinizes rhetorical justifications of America's welfare reform. Voucher-talk may be to education what "self-sufficiency" has apparently become to "workfare." Workfare aimed to make the poor "self-sufficient," but such language, Young contends, obstructs "argument about the meaning of autonomy and work." It makes "meaningful work" an empty phrase. And "self-sufficiency" is a cruel joke absent job security, decent work conditions, and fair benefits. (But why want such things if you are a budding rugged individual?) ■ We learn from Ken Conca that George W. Bush, candidate of the party of "values," likens environmental regulations to "the taking of private property." Although Al Gore feels "the Earth's pain," he often leans toward "market environmentalism," especially when corporate interests abroad are concerned. The Earth and her friends had best be vigilant—and vocal—when it comes to "Compassionate Conservatives" and "New Democrats." ■ "Liberty without equality is a name of noble sound and squalid result," L.T. Hobhouse wrote. But some leftists deduced, disastrously, that egalitarianism resolves all questions of political liberty. For "egalitarianism" substitute "market," for "liberty" substitute . . . well, almost everything, and you have today's neo-liberal piety. Its theologians might learn from left-wing failures.

M.C.

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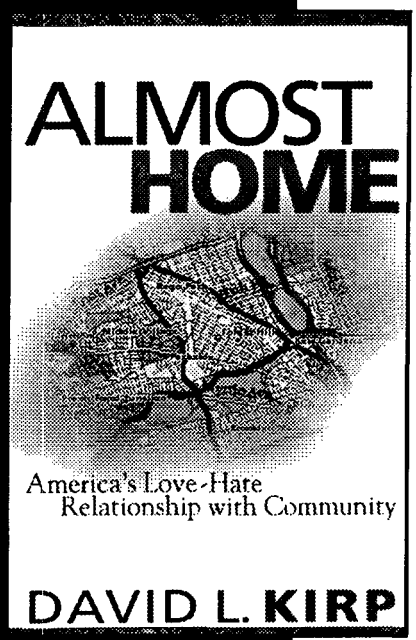

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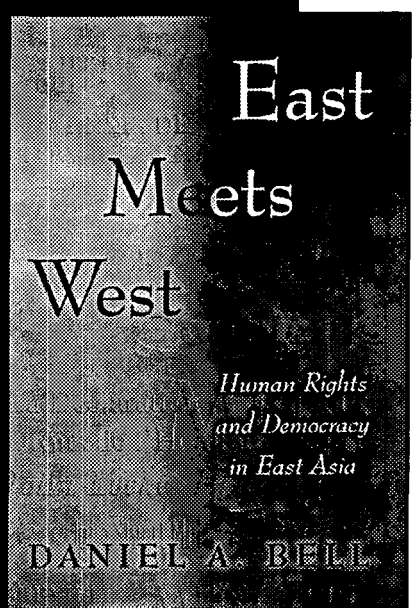

East Meets West

Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia

Daniel A. Bell

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Ending the Globalization Crisis

James K. Galbraith

THE GOVERNING systems of the world economy have failed—in their missions and in their propaganda. Protests in Seattle, at Davos, and lately in Washington have crystallized the spirit of resentment, aimed at tiny elites with great power. Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has resigned. As he left, Camdessus had the grace to acknowledge some of the failings of his institution.

And yet, as sometimes happens with protest movements, the anti-globalists have a weak agenda. They are a coalition led by labor, human rights, and environmental groups; their emphasis has been on protesting losses of jobs and sovereignty and ecological damage. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank loom large on these issues and have been the main targets. Beyond debt relief, a vital first step, the protesters have said little about the IMF.

This has left the initiative to the free-market right. A congressional advisory commission, chaired by old-line monetarist Allan Meltzer, has called for cutting all the international financial institutions. Under the Meltzer proposals, supported by several Democratic commissioners including Jeffrey Sachs—because the commission did support a one-time debt write-down—the IMF would lend only short term and only to support liquidity in crises. After debt relief, everyone else would face the "rigor," or the "discipline," of the market.

But "market discipline" is an oxymoron. If the markets truly imposed discipline, hard-working people would not be poor, and speculators generally would not be rich. That there are hundreds of millions of hard-working poor and thousands of rich speculators tells us, all by itself, that we cannot rely on markets when worldwide economic development is at stake.

It was the failure of free international capital markets in the interwar period that led to the creation, at Bretton Woods in 1944, of the World Bank and the IMF. Their purpose was to finance the reconstruction of Europe and then to provide a framework for stable—but adjustable—exchange rates within which individual nations could pursue full employment without facing crises in their balance of payments. The key architects of Bretton Woods, John Maynard Keynes and Harry Dexter White, were not under the illusion that markets could do the job.

From 1945 until 1970, the system worked—not perfectly—but well enough. Europe and the United States enjoyed near full employment, exchange-rate stability, and unlimited capital market access. The major developing countries built on strong primary export markets to develop their own industries behind walls of protection; the period was known in Mexico, for instance, as the years of "stabilizing development." In truth the IMF was never quite as central as its founders intended—in fact, once the framework had been set, the agency itself was a backwater—but it helped. So long as the United States and Europe were operating at full employment and driving global demand, many poor countries could grow at twice the rates of the developed world—8 percent annually as compared to 4 percent—and many did.

IN THE EARLY 1970s, the system hit a wall. More precisely, it came up against the desire of the great American (and European) financial houses to reclaim their prewar world role. And when the oil shocks hit in 1974, President Richard Nixon and then Gerald Ford took their side, allowing private banks the major role in "recycling petrodollars." The age of

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stabilized currencies came to an end. A key figure in this pivotal decision was George Shultz, a Chicago economist, later secretary of state under Ronald Reagan, and still today a key adviser to presidential contender George W. Bush.

The consequence of forcing Brazil and Mexico and many other countries to fund themselves privately was to end the years of stable development. Roughly speaking, countries can only finance development sustainably so long as their growth rate of exports remains above the growth rate of debt service. But with massive oil deficits, platoons of bankers offering seemingly favorable terms, and the opportunities for graft, corruption, and capital flight, national debts to private entities ballooned. Then, in 1981, Paul Volcker doubled U.S. interest rates and crashed the system.

Under Reagan, the IMF returned to prominence, taking on its modern form as a front for global austerity programs. This role consists essentially of teams of staffers flying into crises to dictate "structural adjustment plans"—in return for which the IMF may offer a direct loan. In the general case, the loan is not enough to fund growth or development, but merely permits the most exposed foreign creditors to escape the worst and the country to escape the embarrassment of overt default or capital controls. The structural adjustment plan is not a formula for reversing the damage to developing country institutions. It is, rather, a device for shifting over to the IMF the blame for measures that would be required in any event, once the fatal decision to attempt to develop on private commercial terms had been made.

Conservative economists argue that floating exchange rates are the right device for stabilizing a trade deficit, so who needs the IMF? The Meltzer Commission explicitly condemns the model of "fixed but adjustable" exchange rates on which the IMF was founded, and argues that developing countries should either float freely or tie their currencies through a currency board.

A currency board is, however, nothing more than a colonial institution. For it to work, a country must have large and liquid reserves, and small development ambitions of its own. Hong Kong offers a good example of a successful currency board, and any other city that handles 70 percent of China's export trade could, no doubt, do equally well. You cannot run a full-employment policy or an industrial development policy under a currency board.

As for purely floating exchange rates, their problem lies in the fact that trade balance adjustment does not occur, as conservatives suppose, through increased competitiveness of exports, so that a country need only devalue to return to full employment. On the contrary, devaluation means that imports become radically more expensive. In most developing countries, two things happen: businesses cut their orders for imported capital equipment and consumers, whose food may be imported, cut back on consumption of domestic manufactures. As a result, devaluation produces depression, along with sharply rising inequalities in the structure of pay.

Rising inequality in developing countries has become pandemic since the early 1980s. But even as we fret over high inequality in the United States, inequality increases in poor countries have been much worse. This increasing inequality is, in fact, a powerful measure of the reversal of the development process.

One may safely infer that those who favor abolishing the IMF do not have the best interests of poor people in developing countries at heart. Their view is, merely, that the fig leaf of structural adjustment is not necessary any longer. Who needs the IMF—except for the occasional bailout loan—when Larry Summers and Alan Greenspan can, and will, deliver the message far more forcefully than a bureaucrat from Germany or a lapsed socialist from France?

And for progressives, here is the rub. The difficulty of the IMF is not that it is too powerful, too large, too rich, or too strong. It is, rather, that it is too weak, too small, too poor—and much too obtuse, as Joseph Stiglitz's brilliant comment in the *New Republic* ("What I Learned at the Financial Revolution," April 17) makes clear—to make a material difference most of the time.

What then? Real reform and a return to financially sustainable growth must mean control of the private capital markets—not a

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modest agenda. Lance Taylor and John Eatwell argue, in an important new book, *Global Finance at Risk: The Case for International Regulation*, for a global financial authority, and they present descriptions of how such a thing might work. I remain skeptical. How can a single world authority not fall under the thumb of the dominant ideologues in the dominant countries?

The alternative is to break the problem of control into manageable pieces. Let Japan organize an Asian Monetary Fund—as indeed the Japanese proposed in 1998 only to be vetoed by the United States, on the ground that it would compete with the IMF. Let the Latin Americans organize a similar fund, with our support. Such institutions would need to be endowed with large financial resources, regulatory powers, and effective control over capital flows to and from their members. They would then set the terms on which loans and investments from private external parties might be sought and received. Let us acknowledge, by enacting a Tobin Tax on foreign-exchange transactions and other measures, that the passing of international monetary management into private hands in the early 1970s was a mistake.

The success stories of the developing world in the years since 1979—China, Taiwan, and India above all—have in common insulation from the global capital markets and freedom from major private debt. Everyone else has gone through crisis after crisis. And the worst crises—as in Russia, Mexico, and Indonesia—have fallen on those countries with the most fecklessly open attitudes toward free capital flow.

And so, what the world needs is not to abandon the goals of coordination, stability, and development—a formula for apocalypse—but to make them work. Private capitalism was never up to the job of government. Abolishing the IMF is not the answer, and preserving it is not the answer either. The entire system must, rather, be rebuilt. ●

JAMES K. GALBRAITH is the author of *Created Unequal: The Crisis in American Pay* and co-editor of *Inequality and Industrial Change: A Global View*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. He is professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the University of Texas at Austin, senior scholar of the Jerome Levy Economics Institute, and director of the University of Texas Inequality Project, whose work on global inequality can be found at http://utip.gov.utexas.edu.

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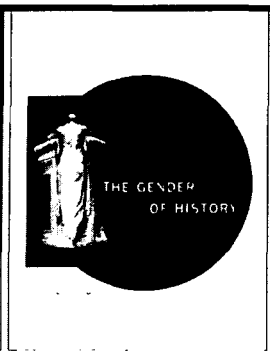

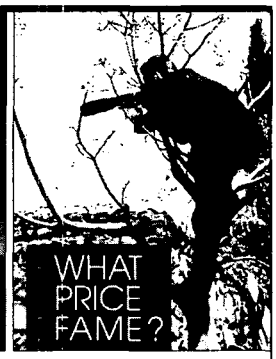

If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?
G. A. COHEN

Focusing on Marxism and Rawlsian liberalism, G. A. Cohen argues that egalitarian justice is not only a matter of rules that define the structure of society, but also a matter of personal attitude and choice. Personal attitude and choice are, moreover, the stuff of which social structure itself is made. Those truths have not informed political philosophy as much as they should, and Cohen's focus on them brings political philosophy closer to moral philosophy than it has recently been.

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Russia's Democratic Dictatorship

Robert V. Daniels

Not since Leonid Brezhnev's death in 1982 has Russia had such a prospect of political stability. Vladimir Putin's election to the presidency this past spring consummated the first voluntary transfer of power—instead of by death or a coup—in the entire millennial span of Russia's history. In essence appointed by his faltering predecessor Boris Yeltsin, the forty-seven-year-old Putin seems destined to enjoy a four-year term with the opportunity for another seven years if the Constitution is so amended.

But stability at what price? It is the stability of exhaustion, coming after jarring change and infirm leadership. Even Yeltsin's dedicated apologists now concede that the man who was supposed to give Russia rule-of-law democracy and free-market prosperity instead turned Russian government into a Byzantine cabal and the economy into a thieves' paradise. National disgust, as much as the Chechen war, explains why a desperate electorate was willing to embrace Yeltsin's unknown designee, if only he would serve as an elected czar and bring order to the country.

But why choose Putin, in particular, to get Russia out of its impasse? The circumstances were supremely ironic. He was picked, as far as anyone can divine, by the same people who were most immediately responsible for the mess, the "Family" so-called— Yeltsin's entourage of relatives, scheming staffers, and financial oligarchs. His mission, as Yeltsin's mandate and health were running out, was plain: to protect the Family's ill-gotten billions by putting down, forcibly if necessary, the real reformers and corruption fighters led by former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov. Yet Putin's backers may get more than they bargained for.

Though he kept a low profile, Putin was not an unknown to those on the inside—certainly no "black box"—when he was tapped for prime minister in August 1999 to end more than a year of revolving door leadership in the Russian government. The big break for this former intelligence operative came in 1990, when his one-time law professor, the late Anatoly Sobchak, became mayor of Leningrad in the democratic local elections that Mikhail Gorbachev had allowed in connection with his reforms of *perestroika*. Sobchak named Putin his assistant for international matters (particularly to seek out foreign investment), and then deputy mayor. He made a positive impression on visiting businessmen.

After the collapse of the Soviet regime, Leningrad/St. Petersburg became a base for free-market reform, and for corruption as well, both associated with the Leningrad economist Anatoly Chubais, Yeltsin's privatization pusher, deputy prime minister, chief of staff, and charter member of the Family. When Putin lost the deputy mayor's job after Sobchak's electoral defeat in 1996, Chubais brought him to Moscow to serve as deputy business manager in the presidential administration, the fourth branch of government in Russia. (His immediate boss at the time, Pavel Borodin, is currently under Swiss indictment for money-laundering.) In 1998 Putin moved to the directorship of the Federal Security Service, the reincarnation of his old employer, the KGB. The Family knew him well when they installed him in the position of prime minister and heir-designate to Yeltsin.

The Kremlin's critics in Russia have been flabbergasted by Putin's political success since that moment. This colorless man with no experience in national leadership—he was never elected to anything and was a protégé of the country's most unpopular politician—was almost instantly perceived by the Russian pub-

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lic as the forceful leader it craved. He came across as a distinctly Germanic personality, efficient and self-disciplined, not unlike Lenin in this respect, and the antithesis of the dissolute and impulsive Yeltsin. The fact that he was Yeltsin's—or the Family's—choice was quickly forgotten. "Putin has won," wrote editor Vitaly Tretiakov of the *Independent Gazette* two days after the March election, "because, of all the candidates he (paradoxically) is the only one whom society does not associate with Yeltsin. . . . He is articulate about his strategic goal of turning Russia into an effective state, a great and rich nation. He is the only one, society believes, who not only wants that but can make it happen."

Old Russian Habits?

To explain away Putin's triumph, native and foreign commentators rediscovered old Russian habits of submission to authority. Journalist Galina Kovalskaya likened his success to the legendary ninth-century invitation by the citizens of Novgorod to the Vikings to "come and rule over us." Public opinion expert Yuri Levada asserted shortly before the presidential election that "Putin can do what he wants.... Russians value might more than principles now." In the Karelian Republic they call Putin "the second Andropov," referring to the long-time KGB chief who briefly succeeded Brezhnev as general secretary in 1982–1984 on a platform of discipline and effort. (The comparison is not pejorative. Andropov is still favorably remembered from his early Communist Party career in Karelia.) Putin candidly acknowledges his historical models—Charles de Gaulle, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, even Napoleon Bonaparte. He has a portrait of Peter the Great in his office. And he restored the statue of Andropov at the Lubianka, headquarters of the Federal Security Service just as it was for the KGB.

To make up for his own lack of charisma, Putin has taken advantage of the nation's enemies both internal and external. Externally, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States were allegedly trying to isolate and humiliate Russia. Internally, it was the rebellious Muslim Chechens of the North Caucasus. By waving the banner of nationalism and by launching all-out war to avenge the defeat of Russian arms at the hands of the Chechen separatists three years before, Putin was by the time of the December parliamentary elections the country's most admired politician. He even won accolades from dissident historian Roy Medvedev as a leader who is "energetic" and "effective," "cautious" and "reliable."

How the Splendid Little War in Chechnya was contrived is a matter of intense controversy among Russian commentators and Russia-watchers abroad. Putin's predecessor as prime minister, Sergei Stepashin (another policeman, supplanted after his brief stint because the Family found him too soft for the mission it contemplated), has revealed that the new Chechen operation was conceived as early as March 1999. At that time Stepashin, an architect of the first Chechen war, was only minister of the interior, but the Family was already conspiring to install him in place of Prime Minister Primakov. By July, the Family was privately threatening a coup if Primakov, heading the opposition after his removal in May, could not be stopped. Early in August, the rogue Chechen leader Shamil Basayev undertook a raid into the neighboring Muslim region of Dagestan, a Russian-inspired *provokatsiya*, charge critics of the government. Just days later, Prime Minister Stepashin got his walking papers, and Putin succeeded him.

The next episode is shrouded in more mystery: a series of apartment-house bombings in Moscow and other Russian cities, officially blamed on the Chechens but later attributed by some critics of the government to the Russian security services themselves, as a pretext for war. Whoever was responsible, the atrocities served as the signal for the ground invasion of Chechnya and a meteoric surge in Putin's political popularity.

Political Shocks

Against this background, the Russian political landscape was shaken in December and January by three seismic shocks. These were the parliamentary elections of December 19, Yeltsin's resignation on New Year's Eve, and Putin's deal with the Communists to take control of the new Duma.

The campaign for the Duma was distin-

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guished by a one-sided media onslaught, less against the Communists than against what the Putin government regarded as its main adversary, the Fatherland-All Russia alliance of Primakov and Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov. Considering all the negativism, the turnout of 62 percent was not bad by American standards (though not impressive by European norms). Thanks in part to pressure on regional governors to deliver the vote—threats to cut off their fuel supplies, for instance—Putin's newly created party, Unity, or "the Bear," came from nowhere to rival the Communists by winning nearly a quarter of the party-list vote for the 225 Duma seats that were distributed proportionally among the major parties. The "Union of Right Forces," the other pro-Putin group, led by ex-prime minister Alexei Kiriyenko along with ex-deputy prime ministers Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, surpassed expectations to win nearly 10 percent of the vote. At the same time, the previously favored Fatherland-All Russia bloc got only 13 percent, and immediately began to fall apart as many of its regional leaders hastened to join Putin.

EVEN SO, the outcome of the Duma election was not the sweeping triumph of "democracy" and "centrism" announced in the world press. The Communists actually came in marginally stronger, though the fact that more parties cleared the 5 percent barrier to be seated meant that their share of the proportional seats had to shrink. Pro-Putin parties got most of their votes by wiping out "Our Home is Russia," the party of long-time prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin; by cutting down Vladimir Zhirinovsky's truly right-wing nationalists; and by soaking up minor-party voters. Coalition politics would have to be the order of the day.

The new Duma is an interesting animal in its own right. The six main parties, with their seats from 225 single-member districts added in, scored as follows: Communist Party of the Russian Federation, 113; Unity, 72; Fatherland-All Russia, 66; Union of Right Forces, 29; Yabloko ("Apple," the classic liberals led by Grigory Yavlinsky), 21; Zhirinovskyites, 17; minor parties and independents (all from single-member districts), 122. Ten single-member seats were left vacant where the voters exercised their unique Russian option to vote "none of the above" and defeat all the candidates on the ballot.

This Duma is much younger on average than its predecessors, and less than half of its members have served in any previous Russian parliament. On the other hand, there are members with noteworthy experience: no less than six former prime ministers, going back to Gorbachev's one-time aide Nikolai Ryzhkov and including every one of the men Yeltsin had fired before he appointed Putin. The body also includes the billionaire Family members Boris Berezovsky and Roman Abramovich, who essentially bought themselves seats in remote districts in order to gain parliamentary immunity from prosecution arising from their business activities.

Less than two weeks after the Duma election came the second political bombshell, not entirely unexpected except as to its timing, when Yeltsin abdicated in favor of his heir-designate. Putin was thereby elevated to the position of acting president (while retaining the prime ministership for the time being). The impending presidential election was moved up from June to late March to comply with the constitutional requirement that an election be held no less than three months after an acting president takes over.

Yeltsin's departure met with universal relief among Russians, but speculation ran riot over the motive as well as the manner of his resignation. Did he execute a shrewd move to advance the electoral prospects of his preferred successor before the opposition had a chance to regroup and before the Chechnya war might go sour? Or, more likely, in his dotage, was Yeltsin talked into resigning by the Family, acting through his daughter Tatyana Dyachenko, in order to let Putin tighten his grip and distance himself from his patron before having to face the voters? The uncharacteristic retirement statement that Yeltsin was given to read, apologizing for the failings of his administration, strongly points toward the latter theory. According to Gorbachev, "He resisted with all his might. Essentially, they pushed him."

In any case, Putin took the helm with vigor and dispatch, promising to hew to "the path of

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democracy and reforms," but assuring the public, "There will be no power vacuum, even for a moment." He began immediately to clean Family cronies out of the presidential staff and the Council of Ministers, while decreeing personal immunity from prosecution for the outgoing Yeltsin (shades of Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon!). Among the first to go was Yeltsin's daughter, relieved of her official post as presidential image-maker. Next came the Family's chief agent in the cabinet, First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Aksyonenko, who was demoted to his old job of railways minister. How Putin would cope in the meantime with the Kremlin's enemies, still strong in the new parliament as they licked their electoral wounds, was soon made clear.

When the newly elected Duma convened in mid-January and commenced its organizational routine, ex–prime minister Primakov, anathema to the Kremlin, seemed to be the leading candidate for speaker. But to most members' surprise, Putin's Unity Party concluded a non-aggression pact with the Communists and re-elected the outgoing Communist speaker, Gennady Seleznyov. Ignoring the tradition of European parliaments, observed in Russia since 1991, that all parties share in positions of leadership, Unity and the Communists excluded all their opponents, including Primakov, from the deputy speakerships and committee chairs. This gambit prompted a brief protest walkout by the losers, the Primakov-Luzhkov Fatherland bloc, Yabloko, and even Kiriyenko's Union of Right Forces (who had themselves been snubbed by Putin).

The opposition did not long hold ranks in its defiance, however. As their supporters in the regions dribbled over to the Putin camp, they lost their resolve, and by the end of January agreed to end their boycott of the Duma. Cut out of the speakership, Primakov withdrew his announced intention to run against Putin for president, leaving only the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov as a major challenger to the incumbent. Putin, for his part, urged the formation of a two-party system, and assigned the role of opposition to the Communists: "We have always been cooperating with the Communists in the Duma," and their social base could not be ignored. "They stand a realistic chance of becoming a modern parliamentary party in the European sense of the term." Russia seemed headed for the kind of party system without alternatives that marked Italy and Japan for decades after World War II: one dominant, conservative party, and a tame opposition (in Italy, the Communists and their allies; in Japan, the Socialists) who could never win an election. The Russian political scientist Lilia Shevtsova called it a "pocket two-party system."

PUTIN'S TRIUMPH in the March election was a foregone conclusion, the only matter in doubt being whether he would score the absolute majority in the first round needed to avoid a runoff. Backed by a virtual media monopoly as in the Duma election, he made it with almost 53 percent against Zyuganov's 29 percent. Zyuganov played his assigned oppositional part the old way, predictably charging vote fraud, though Putin actually polled a few points less than the pre-election surveys had predicted, and Zyuganov was correspondingly up. Practically everyone else of consequence, apart from Yavlinsky's unbending band of liberals (weighing in at just under 6 percent) was sucked into the Putin orbit, fearing to remain alienated from the new center of political gravity. Most of the regional governors, even Mayor Luzhkov of Moscow, forgot about Fatherland-All Russia and climbed aboard the Putin bandwagon. The Union of Right Forces—the party of ex–prime ministers—fell apart, as most of its leaders endorsed Putin.

Having co-opted almost everyone in sight, Putin virtually wiped out Russia's nascent multiparty politics. Some critics, like the long-tme human rights advocate Sergei Kovalyov, revived the specter of "a Pinochet-style dictatorship" that had flickered in the Russian political firmament throughout the Yeltsin years. The oligarchs didn't mind. Pyotr Aven of the "Alfa" banking group urged "totalitarian force" to protect the market: "I'm a supporter of Pinochet." Yavlinsky called Putin "a Communist in disguise," and Andrei Sakharov's widow, Yelena Bonner, predicted "modernized Stalinism," adding, "If in 1991 someone had said that the KGB would return to power nine years later, I would

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have thought him mad. How can this be happening?" By a better margin than Adolf Hitler scored in Weimar Germany's last free election, Putin won what the late William Yandell Elliott termed a "doctor's mandate"—take charge, and cure our desperate and humiliated country any way you can.

Restoring State Power?

Putin is not the unformed neophyte with "no bottom line" that Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott described to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Rarely has a leader in any country had his biography and principles more openly advertised, even to the extent of posting them on the Web site of the Russian government. Putin has made his bottom line perfectly clear: it is to restore the power and prestige of the Russian state. Uncertainty resides only in his tactical approach to this overriding goal: his emerging style is to move simultaneously in each area of policy, shifting his emphasis from one to the other as need be.

In foreign policy, Putin is both the nationalist and the Westernizer. He professes a commitment to Russia's integration in "civilization," with reforms to attract foreign investment. But much of his political appeal is based on hopes that he will reverse Russia's national decline of the past decade. He has been ferocious on the subject of Chechnya and Western criticism of the war. His military doctrine now includes the first use of nuclear weapons if the country's defense requires it (just as NATO threatened during the cold war). Under the pressure of NATO expansion and competition to control Caspian oil, it is not surprising that Putin joined the call to resist what Russia considers the American bid for global hegemony. At the same time, he speaks soft words to keep the door open for foreign loans and investment. But never since 1991 has foreign money more than fractionally offset the capital flight that has kept Russia so impoverished. If Putin could stop the outflow (and even get some of that money back), Russia would be independent of outside financial support.

In politics, Putin reiterates his theoretical embrace of democracy at the same time that he shows in practice what he means by a strong state. Publicly honoring the history of the communist secret police, he has tightened oversight of the press by regulation or threat and implemented police surveillance of e-mail transmissions and Web sites, with a chilling effect on potential critics. By political and financial arm-twisting, he pressures the governors into subservience to the center.

On the economy, Putin enunciates principles of the free market that accord with Western expectations. In the same breath he backs an interventionist role for the state. He realizes that Russia's revival on the international scene must come about above all in economic terms, which means growth, revitalization of industry and agriculture, and a war on poverty. To this end, his minimum program, so to speak, is to encourage foreign investment and the voluntary return of Russian capital from abroad, by guaranteeing property rights, enforcing the rule of law, and instituting a level playing field in the market. To plan for economic growth, even before he took over from Yeltsin, Putin set up a "Center for Strategic Studies" under another St. Petersburg friend, German Gref. But Gref appears to be a doctrinaire free-marketeer, while Putin has already committed himself to protectionist measures and the social safety net.

Over all this uncertainty hangs the question of how Putin will deal with the financial oligarchy that put him in power. "Don't they realize what is obvious to everyone," wrote the business-oriented *Sevodnya* [*Today*], "that their song is over no matter what, that no new president is going to put up with the old clique of advisers?" Even before his election, knowing the unpopularity of the tycoons, Putin turned his rhetoric against them and promised ominously, "There will be no such oligarchs as a class." This reminder of how Stalin liquidated the kulaks "as a class" hinted at a maximum program, if and when the moderate approach fails to deliver the quick economic gains that Putin demands: dispossess the oligarchs, reclaim their exported assets by force, and renationalize properties, especially in the energy sector, that were more or less criminally given away to the financial combines during the Yeltsin years. Such steps could swing Russia over to the Chinese economic model of state control at the top with individual enterprise still

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left lower down. To be sure, Putin faulted his Communist partners for "their demand of confiscating and nationalizing everything," but he left the door open for expropriating the moguls as the Communists urge: "If the preceding years have been marked by some illicit steps which have been established and proven in court, that is quite another matter."

Berezovsky, the most outspoken of the tycoons, was arrogantly unmoved: "It is impossible to distance oligarchs from power," he told the German magazine *Der Stern*. "Big capital will always be in power, as we live in a modern society. If Putin eliminates one oligarch, another will appear." But putting down at least that one oligarch would seem politically to be a sine qua non for Putin, if only to show who is boss. To kill two birds with one stone he might also tighten his squeeze on Berezovsky's rival and Kremlin enemy Vladimir Gusinsky and assure state direction over their respective media empires. Considering the police ideology of nationalism, statism, and control that nurtured the new president, the prospects are strong for the subordination of private business interests, one way or another, to the interests of the state.

With the election of Vladimir Putin—a coronation, some say—and his affirmation of a "strong state," Russia's long era of postrevolutionary wobbling may have come to an end. "Russia settled down," explained the noted political analyst Alexander Tsipko, "but in a typically Russian way. . . . We are returning to a Russian political tradition in which all responsibility for the country's situation is given to a supreme ruler." For some time, Putin can seek to balance off options—democracy and authoritarianism, regionalism and centralism, free market and planned economy, Russian nationalism and the global community. There are analogies in the aftermath of earlier revolutions, notably nineteenth-century France, where the Emperor Napoleon III, epigone of the original postrevolutionary dictator, offered his own model of soft authoritarianism. A more recent parallel, more apt than Pinochet, might be Peronism. In any case, the oxymoronic democratic capitalism that Western leaders so fondly imagined in the Yeltsin regime remains unrealized and unrealizable. ●

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WELCOME ABOARD

We're happy to welcome to our "official" family three people who have written for us and enriched the magazine in many ways over the past several years. They were elected to the editorial board at its spring meeting.

DAVID GLENN, former associate editor of *Dissent*, is a writer and activist currently researching a book on welfare, workfare, and left-wing responses.

MICHAEL KAZIN, a former leader of Students for a Democratic Society in Boston and currently involved in labor support activities, is a professor of history and author of books on labor history and populism. He is at work on a study of William Jennings Bryan and his followers.

RUTH ROSEN is a professor of history at the University of California at Davis. Her most recent book is *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. Her frequent op-ed columns appear in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

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The Dark Side of Austrian Social Democracy

The Social Democratic Party's Role in the "Haider Phenomenon"

Andrei S. Markovits and Anson Rabinbach

On April 7, just two months after the formation of a coalition government that includes members of Jörg Haider's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), Alfred Gusenbauer, newly designated chief of the Austrian Socialist Party (SPÖ), a former youth leader not known for bold pronouncements, issued an extraordinary document. The "declaration" revealed details of the so-called "brown-spots" in the Party's postwar history and acknowledged "the errors and omissions" for which it was responsible during the Second Republic. Among these, it specified that after the civil war of 1934, many rank-and-file Austrian socialists, out of disappointment and bitterness, "had been driven into the hands of the National Socialists." Moreover, it admitted that the Party's leader and the first president of the Second Republic, Karl Renner, had "for reasons that have not yet been fully explained," welcomed the Anschluss with Nazi Germany in 1938. It further acknowledged that after the war efforts at denazification were "incomplete" and that Austrian courts frequently ignored serious cases or handed down sentences and acquittals that today would appear "unacceptable." During the period of reconstruction, and, especially during the early cold war, when Austria (until 1955) was still under allied rule (the West and the USSR), the pursuit of legal justice, reparations, or the return of confiscated property succumbed to a "collective repression."

At the heart of the declaration was the recognition that both major parties in postwar Austria, the socialists and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)—the heir of the prewar Christian-Social Party—were responsible for the creation of a third party designed to attract former Nazis, the "Association of Independents" (VdU), the forerunner of today's FPÖ. The VdU, it noted, was greeted with a "positive attitude" by SPÖ leaders and was brought into existence as a consequence of the "tactical interests of the coalition partners at that time."

Finally, and most important, the declaration reserved its sharpest criticism for former chancellor Bruno Kreisky's role in promoting the careers of former Nazis in the SPÖ. Though it praised Kreisky as a "creator of modern Austria," it did not mince words in condemning his attacks on Simon Wiesenthal—who at the time vehemently denounced Kreisky's willingness to take former Nazis into the cabinet—as "unfair and therefore unacceptable."

The Gusenbauer declaration was applauded by former Austrian chancellor Franz Vranitsky, but criticized by Wiesenthal as "coming too late," and by the Green Party's Peter Pilz for focusing on the "brown-spots" in Austria's past at the expense of the "blue-spots" (the FPÖ's color) in its more recent history. Still, the SPÖ took a major step to make public some of the facts that historians and many Austrians have long since known. As early as 1953, Joseph Buttinger, a leader of the Austrian underground Revolutionary Socialists and husband of the American philanthropist Muriel Gardiner (whose story was the basis of Lillian Hellman's book and the film *Julia*), wrote in his autobiographical *In the Twilight of Socialism* that while prominent socialists like Robert Danneberg, Benedikt Kautsky (son of the German SPD theorist), and Otto Steinitz were sent to concentration camps, others chose to negotiate with the Nazis. Among them was Renner, who exchanged his freedom for a public statement calling the Anschluss a historical advance. In fairness to Renner, he explained in an English language statement that

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he had "taken upon myself the necessities of the whole nation" and that "it hurts me to have to submit . . . as the child of a humanist century to an incomprehensible race regime." Before 1933, many Austrian Socialists wanted an Anschluss with Germany, but for different reasons: they hoped that by Austria's joining Germany, the two jewels of the Second International might in fact create a social democratic hegemony that neither one of them could attain in their respective countries.

Socialist Pragmatism?

Banned under the Nazis, the Austrian SPÖ reconstituted itself in 1945 under new postwar circumstances. Adopting the November 1943 Moscow declaration of the allies calling Austria "the first victim of Nazi aggression," the Socialists rebuilt the party on a very different foundation from the "Austro-Marxist" social democracy of the First Republic. Austria's two hundred thousand Jews, most of whom had voted for the Socialists because the Christian Social Party program contained a notorious Aryan paragraph, were gone, either murdered or driven abroad. As Adolf Sturmthal, who had been an assistant to Friedrich Adler (head of the Labor and Socialist International) in the 1930s and returned to Austria in 1945 as the chairman of "Friends of Austrian Labor" in American exile, soon learned, the new SPÖ was not warmly disposed toward returning émigrés. Though a few well-known figures like Kautsky and the editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, Oskar Pollak, did return to Vienna, the new Party chair, Adolf Schärf, made it clear that he regarded a flood of returning Jewish émigrés as a potential problem for the Socialists in a country with a long anti-Semitic tradition. Some key leaders of postwar social democracy, like Lower Austria's Heinrich Schneidmadl, had reputations as anti-Semites, and Schneidmadl's wing of the party had always been wary of what it perceived to be the inordinate presence of Jewish intellectuals in the SPÖ top echelons. According to the British historian Robert Knight, when the subject of restitution of Jewish property was raised in postwar cabinet meetings SPÖ interior minister Oskar Helmer said, "I am for dragging out the matter." It soon became clear that many of the exiles would not return to Austria. For example, Otto Leichter, who had been Otto Bauer's right-hand man before the war, and whose wife, Käthe, had perished in Ravensbrück, chose to remain in New York (where his son Franz became a state senator).

The Socialist declaration only hints at the extent of support for the Nazis among former Social Democrats both prior to and after the Anschluss in 1938. In 1933, several months before the short but bloody February 1934 civil war between the Socialists and the paramilitary Heimwehr forces drove the Socialists underground and into exile, striking mineworkers in Styria already showed increasing sympathy for the Nazis. After they were defeated, a few embittered Socialist leaders even turned to the Nazi Party in Germany to continue the fight against the hated Christian-Socials. Once constitutional law was abolished and Austria became a corporate state under Engelbert Dollfuss, the more conservative leaders of the outlawed Socialist Party repudiated the illegal underground movement and called on Austrian workers to join the official government trade union association. Hitler's jubilant welcome in Austria in March 1938 was not confined to the country's middle class as socialist mythology later claimed. He was also welcomed by many blue-collar workers who hoped that the "socialist" dimension of the Nazis' policies would mean better jobs for them in the newly constituted "Ostmark."

Immediately following the war, the reconstituted SPÖ's emphasis on pragmatism and cooperation with former enemies in the Catholic camp led to the creation of a tightly controlled two-party form of governing that has come to be known as "neo-corporate consociationalism." This system, popularly referred to as "Proporz"—in reality, joint two-party control over government, civil service, and most of public life—was seen as the only possible way to avoid the violent and ideological confrontations between armed camps that characterized the First Republic. This system also promoted speedy accommodation with ex-Nazis, who came to be known as the "used-to-be's" (*ehemalige*), and whose past the parties were now willing to forget as long as they proved to be loyal voters, supporters, and eventually functionaries. Particularly in Austria's southern province of Carinthia (Haider's home-base and his current bailiwick

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as governor) the SPÖ openly wooed ex-Nazis to join its ranks and start a new life in a party whose pedigree, though far from innocent, was by far the cleanest the new republic could offer. In that way the Socialists promoted a parallel track designed to weaken their only political rival (and consociational partner), the People's Party.

Rather than have the bulk of Austria's 680,000 registered Nazi Party members become supporters of the conservatives, the SPÖ openly advocated the creation of the Association of Independents. As a third force it could provide a home for German nationalist diehards who, like Jörg Haider's father, Robert, refused to accept Austrian nationhood and persisted in promoting pan-German slogans. Disenfranchised in the 1945 parliamentary elections by dint of its members' active cooperation with National Socialism, this group garnered 11.7 percent of the popular vote in 1949. In this situation, both parties competed for the votes of the "used-to-be's" while the active pursuit of justice for victims of Nazi crimes was quietly allowed to lapse. At the Socialist Party Congress in 1952, Schärf declared, "No one can tell me that socialism or the party can ignore this person or that person because he had a particular past or once was our enemy." The VdU was so influential in the early years of the Second Republic that it was invited to join a "grand coalition" to govern the country. However, President Theodor Körner refused to allow the VdU to participate. Because of its origins, Anton Pelinka, Austria's leading political scientist, notes that today's FPÖ is not a Nazi party but "a party founded by former Nazis for former Nazis."

The Kreisky Problem

The SPÖ's tacit tolerance and quiet courting of ex-Nazis turned open and vocal under the leadership of Bruno Kreisky beginning in 1970. Kreisky, an assimilated Viennese Jew of the educated middle class, who had been driven into Swedish exile and only returned to Austria in 1951, ironically made anti-Semitism more acceptable in Austrian politics than any other postwar politician. Fascinated by the thirty-year hegemony of Swedish social democracy (as were many continental émigrés including Willy Brandt and Rudolf Meidner), Kreisky hoped that by weakening the conservative ÖVP and strengthening the far-right FPÖ he, too, would be able to establish "Swedish" conditions in Austria. The bourgeois parties would be splintered, thus leaving a powerful social democracy as the permanent rulers of the country. The active pursuit of this Swedish strategy coincided quite conveniently with Kreisky's apparent personal dislike of Jews. He publicly expressed to the German weekly *Der Spiegel* that Jews were "a small but unattractive people." Kreisky ostentatiously embraced Yasir Arafat and Muammar Qaddafi during their repeated meetings in Vienna and elsewhere, while regularly referring to Israeli leaders, especially Menachem Begin, as *Ostjuden*, the derogatory term commonly used by German (and Austrian) Jews to refer to their East European co-religionists.

Kreisky's personal prejudice happened to be superb politics in a country where well into the 1970s more than 70 percent of the population still harbored anti-Jewish sentiments. Not insignificantly, Josef Klaus, Kreisky's victorious opponent in the 1966 national elections campaigned under the slogan "a true Austrian," implying that Kreisky was not so. Kreisky's victory in 1970 allowed the SPÖ to come to power alone for the first time, breaking the traditional political consociationalism in which Socialists shared power as the ÖVP's junior partner. Now the Socialists formed a minority government, which meant that they had to rely on tacit parliamentary approval of the political "Third Man," the FPÖ. Its leader, Friedrich Peter, a former high-ranking member of the SS, worked out a secret arrangement with Kreisky. The two became not only political allies but personal friends. When Simon Wiesenthal revealed in 1975 that Peter's unit had participated in the systematic shooting of Russian Jews in the summer of 1941, Peter admitted to having belonged to the unit but denied participating in the executions. Kreisky rescued Peter's career by vehemently attacking Wiesenthal and preventing any further investigation of Peter. "The only thing that matters is the present," declared Kreisky, "not the past."

Studies by the Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak and other social scientists demonstrate that in the wake of Kreisky's attacks on Wiesenthal, anti-Semitic discourse grew and became more legitimate in Austrian public life. Four of the

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eleven ministers in Kreisky's first cabinet and five in his second were former members of the Nazi Party. Kreisky's designated agricultural minister, Hans Öllinger, had to resign after it was revealed that unbeknownst to Kreisky he had an "illegal" SS background. Öllinger's successor was a man who had been "merely" a legal member of the Nazis.

Conferring Legitimacy

In 1983, the Austrian Socialists entered into an official coalition government with the FPÖ, conferring political legitimacy on the party and forming for the first time in the Second Republic's history a so-called "small coalition." Though such coalitions were the norm in virtually all European democracies, it was taboo in Austria because of the FPÖ's unique connection to the Nazi past. In fairness to Kreisky and the SPÖ, the FPÖ's debut at the helm of Austria's government occurred under the chancellorship of Fred Sinowatz, Kreisky's immediate successor. It also happened during a brief hiatus in the FPÖ's history, when, in the early 1980s, the party's liberal wing gained short-lived prominence. (This ended with Haider's ascension in 1986.) Though the SPÖ-FPÖ coalition lasted only until 1986, the taboo was broken. The Social Democrats had granted the FPÖ its first access to state power.

Of course, the ÖVP, just like the SPÖ, had its own Nazi problems. Reinhard Kamitz, minister of finance in the 1950s, was a Nazi Party member and the ÖVP was not above using subtle anti-Semitism in its electoral campaigns. In 1965 there were pitched battles in Vienna between right-wing students and trade unionists over government efforts to retire Taras Borodajkewyz, a business professor who made repeated and openly pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic remarks in his lectures. Most important, Kurt Waldheim was a prominent member of the ÖVP, and most of its members and supporters stood by him during the entire six years of his ill-fated presidency where—for the first time—an Austrian politician, indeed the country's head of state, was persona non grata in most European countries.

The collaboration between Austria's Social Democrats and the ex-Nazis only recently came into public prominence. But this was not only because of Jörg Haider's 27 percent electoral showing last October. What will probably be Austria's last trial involving the Nazi past began this past winter. Eighty-three-year-old psychiatrist Heinrich Gross was tried in Vienna for conducting a euthanasia program in Vienna under Nazi rule, which involved the murder of young children. (The trial was suspended due to Gross's ill-health.) Gross was a Nazi of the first hour: a member of the Hitler Youth as of 1932, of the *Sturmabteilung* one year later, and enjoyed rapid career advancement as an active Nazi leader during the period in which the Nazi Party was illegal in Austria (1934–1938). In short, Gross was a Nazi by conviction not opportunism. After the war he conveniently exchanged his Nazi membership for a Socialist one. Then, as a special protégé of Christian Broda, Austria's distinguished minister of justice from 1960 to1983, he was accorded every accolade, honor, and privilege that the Austrian Republic could bestow. As Wiesenthal recalled, when Broda received information about Nazi criminals, he routinely replied, "We will study the matter" and took no further action. Gross's trial is merely an egregious example of the still unwritten but all the more ugly side of postwar Austrian social democracy.

The declaration of responsibility and apology for the SPÖ's long history of "errors and omissions" makes a serious and courageous new beginning. It concludes with the excellent suggestion that all Austrian parties make their internal party protocols available for public scrutiny. If this indeed became the case, it would open a chapter in Austrian history that has for too long been shrouded in darkness and whispers. It would also reveal the close connections between both major Austrian parties and the phenomenal but not all that surprising rise to prominence of Jörg Haider. ●

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What Does 'School Choice' Mean?

Amy Gutmann

HALF OF ADULT Americans cannot understand jury instructions or summarize basic information about schools from a simple chart. Although some are recent immigrants, most are products of our primary and secondary school system—whose mission is to produce citizens capable of sitting on juries, assessing policy proposals (about schools, for example), exercising their rights, and seizing their opportunities to live a good life. Each year in inner-city public schools, tens of thousands of students fail to learn even the barest minimum that is necessary—never mind sufficient—for democratic citizenship and economic opportunity.

Education tops the public's list of salient issues in American politics, and there is no shortage of suggestions for quick fixes. The reform proposal that has gained the most press and political ground in recent years is school vouchers. Parents—regardless of their income—should be able to choose a public or private school for their children, at public expense. George W. Bush's idea is to give parents "whatever offers hope" for their children. If elected president, he proposes to transfer $1,500 per child per year of federal Title I money from failing schools to parents, to use at the school of their choice.

George W.'s brother Jeb, governor of Florida, has already initiated what the *New York Times* calls the "nation's boldest voucher experiment." Florida is the first and only publicly funded voucher experiment at the statewide level, although citywide experiments in Cleveland and Milwaukee have been in place longer and therefore enroll more students. This year, Florida's experiment enrolled only fifty-three students; Cleveland and Milwaukee together total more than ten thousand. But the potential enrollment of the Florida experiment is much greater: all parents of students whose public schools fail standardized tests twice in four years will be eligible for vouchers usable at the school of their choice, public or private, secular or parochial. The vouchers this year are worth $3,400 on average—the lesser of the per-pupil cost of the failing public school or the private school's tuition.

Voucher advocates put their trust in market forces and distrust public standards and values, such as the integrationist idea of bringing children from different backgrounds together in learning as preparation for democratic citizenship. Most would not require voucher schools to renounce racial, religious, or gender discrimination. Many also oppose the idea of a "wall of separation" between church and state. Most acknowledge that schools, as publicly funded and accredited institutions, should serve public purposes. But they think that these purposes are minimal, and whenever they are controversial—as are many curricular standards, along with the principle of nondiscrimination—voucher advocates oppose public enforcement and defer to parental choice in the marketplace.

ACCORDING TO these advocates, our present system—in which public schools are fully funded while private schools receive only tax exemptions and smaller subsidies—is unfair to parents who send their children to private schools. But is it really unfair that the public does not fund, say, schools that teach Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or for that matter, atheism as the truth, and give preference to children of parents who have the true faith or who eschew all faith? The unfairness of our present school system must be located

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elsewhere than in the public's refusal to fund *any* school preferred by *any* parent.

Why, then, do vouchers have public appeal even, say, among people on the center left? Many Americans rightly think it unfair that rich parents but not poor ones can opt out of a failing urban school system and send their children to private schools. Catholic schools in inner cities—which are often integrated by race, gender, and even religion—are eager to admit more students, but most inner-city parents cannot afford even their relatively low tuition. Vouchers for poor parents could make a difference. That inner-city parents cannot find good public schools for their children has become a major source of the appeal of vouchers—particularly to these same parents, who are disproportionately African American and Hispanic American.

The unfairness of our present system thus resides not in the absence of choice per se but in the presence of poverty and an inadequate public school system, which disadvantages both poor parents and their children, who deserve better and are entitled to more. It is not only unfair but also unjust that people who are willing and able to work cannot find decent-paying jobs (that cover child care) and cannot afford to live in safe neighborhoods that provide good public schools for their children. The truly bold reform—one that is also clearly constitutional—would be for the public to support decent-paying work and a real safety net for everyone, including good child care, public schools, and health care. But this support has not been forthcoming, nor is it visible on the political horizon. Are vouchers therefore a second-best response to a much broader problem of unfairness that this country does not have the will to address?

The problem with defending vouchers on grounds of fairness to poor children is that the inner logic of voucher proposals—and the aim of many proponents—is equal public financing for private and public schools, not good schooling for poor children. The most eminent and vocal voucher advocates think it is unfair that any parents, even the richest, should have to pay more to send their children to private schools than they would to send their child to a comparably costly public school. The argument is that parents whose preferences tend toward private schools are double-taxed. What fairness requires is that (in any given school district) the same tax dollars should follow all children—not just poor or otherwise disadvantaged children—to private or public schools. (The private schools, however, would not be democratically governed, while the public ones would be.) A successful voucher movement in this country would therefore provide an enormous subsidy to affluent parents. Would it significantly increase educational opportunity for disadvantaged children?

If we (the citizens of this country) were committed to giving poor parents what most parents want for their children, we would not follow the voucher route; we would do whatever it takes to improve public schools. The vast majority of parents who can afford private education send their children to public schools, and poll after poll shows that they are satisfied with these schools. Even among the highest-earning fifth of American families, only about 15 percent of children attend private schools, and despite the skyrocketing incomes of the top quintile over the past twenty years, the proportion has actually decreased slightly. Voucher advocates might say that this is because economic incentives push parents toward public schools. True enough. Public schools are publicly funded while private schools are not. But we should remember that if this is the complaint, then the controversy is not about achieving parity between rich and poor, but rather whether private schools, in "fairness" to the rich more than the poor, must also be publicly funded.

Constitutions and Markets

Should private schools be publicly funded? One part of this question is constitutional. Florida's voucher program may be discontinued because its state constitution mandates public provision of a free education through a system of public schools. State Circuit Court Judge L. Ralph Smith ruled against Florida's voucher law without considering any evidence other than the state constitution's language, which guarantees a "uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high-quality system of free public schools." He therefore did not consider, for

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example, the relative quality of the education provided by the private schools that accepted voucher students. (It would be extremely difficult—probably impossible—for the court to determine this in any case.) Judge Smith ruled that although the fifty-three children may finish the school year on vouchers, the state can take no other action to implement the voucher law because the state constitution prohibits using "tax dollars . . . to send the children of this state to private schools."

The case against vouchers surely will not be settled by this lower court ruling. Many state constitutions and the United States Constitution are not worded in a way that is so apparently restrictive. Besides, those of us who support *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade* or who oppose capital punishment should be wary of rejoicing in a court ruling based on the constitutional doctrine of original meaning. (It would be interesting to see whether Justice Scalia agrees with this lower court ruling, which is faithful to his preferred judicial doctrine. But original meaning, in some hands, at least, is such a slippery idea that it lends itself to a philosopher friend's reaction to Judge Smith's ruling: the words of Florida's constitution do not preclude the state's *also* funding private schools. One does need to know a few facts, but not many, to say that Florida's voucher program is not an add-on to an existing "uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high-quality system of free public schools.") In any case, the political argument for vouchers is still an option in all those states with constitutions whose educational provisions are more open-ended than Florida's.

No constitutional rulings will relieve citizens of the need to decide whether vouchers are a remedy for the problems of our public schools. John Chubb and Terrence Moe, two of the most prominent academic defenders of vouchers, put the positive case most straightforwardly: "Choice is a panacea." A thoroughgoing voucher plan, they argue, "has the capacity all by itself to bring about the kind of transformation that, for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in myriad other ways." Voucher plans uniquely have this capacity, proponents say, because competition in a free market is the only way of improving the quality of just about anything people want in the world—and parents certainly want better primary and secondary schools for their children. They don't want to depend on state bureaucrats, who are surely not the best agents for satisfying consumer demand. A case in point, which I had the pleasure of confirming, was the difference between the old state-run restaurants and the new private ones in Prague, shortly after the collapse of communism. (The latter all displayed signs that proclaimed the same name: "Private Restaurant.") Little doubt about it: market choice in restaurants is a panacea for improving the quality of cuisine—or close enough to a panacea not to quibble.

But is market choice in primary and secondary schooling also a panacea for improving the quality of education for disadvantaged inner-city children? Is there no significant difference between improving schools in Chicago and restaurants in postcommunist Prague? Not according to the philosophy of Milton Friedman, who can be credited with getting the voucher ball rolling in this country. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman compared schools and restaurants. Beyond funding school vouchers, the sole role of government in education, he argued, should be to inspect schools to assure that they meet minimal curricular standards "much as it now inspects restaurants to assure that they maintain minimum sanitary standards."

This analogy, which drives the market model, is more revealing than George W. and other politicians defending vouchers may want to admit. If the public's interest in schools and restaurants is so similar, then citizens have no obligation to pay for schools for other people's children. We don't have a public obligation to pick up other people's restaurant tabs. At least as troubling from the perspective of a constitutional democracy, the analogy suggests that the public has no obligation to ensure that schools are desegregated or that they teach to high standards. We do not have a public obligation to dine at a common table or to eat good food.

Unlike restaurants, primary and secondary schools serve public purposes. They should ensure that all children—regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity,

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or religion—receive an education that prepares them to exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities as citizens. Again, advocates of parental choice and market control downplay the public purposes of schooling, and this is not accidental. It coincides with the idea of consumer sovereignty: the market should deliver whatever the consumers of its goods want. The problems with applying the market model to vouchers should now be apparent. First, the market model is based on consumer sovereignty, but parents are not the consumers of education. Children are. And even the most ardent advocates of the market model don't argue that children's preferences are the ones that should be counted. Second, the market model is based on the idea that "he who pays the piper picks the tune." But democratic citizens, not parents, pay the piper. If their tune is that schools should serve public purposes, then the market model collapses into a defense of democratic control of publicly funded schools. Ironically, if the market model supports any side in this controversy, it supports the public side.

Public Remedies

We are still left with the question of how to remedy the problems of our failing school systems. We would do well to begin by locating where the system is actually failing. In many states and most suburban areas, students score higher on standardized tests than in any other country in the world, and the vast majority of these students attend public schools. The public school systems outside of inner cities have also improved over time in their teaching of civic values such as toleration and nondiscrimination. Although there is room for further improvement in suburban schools, the morally and politically salient problem is the ongoing failure of public schools in our large inner cities.

Means-tested voucher programs would represent a commitment to find some way to deliver a decent education to the most disadvantaged students. The problem is that the results of the few voucher programs in existence lend no support to the claim that school choice by itself is a surefire way of improving the education of a sizable proportion of students at risk. The results after three years of the private-public school voucher experiment in Milwaukee, which targets the least advantaged students in the city, show modest improvements in mathematics test scores but no improvement in English scores over non-voucher school students. According to the economist Cecilia Rouse, the improvements are more likely attributable to smaller class size than to competition or private control. Her hypothesis is supported by the project STAR experiment in Tennessee, where 11,600 students were randomly assigned to either small or regular-size classes within public schools. Economists Alan Krueger and Diane Whitmore found that small class size significantly increased educational achievement, especially among disadvantaged minority students, and narrowed the black-white gap on college tests by 54 percent. These are preliminary findings, but they offer another reason to doubt the claim that parental choice is the key to improving education.

Is increasing parental choice important at all? Yes, but the most publicly defensible way of creating competition in education is to give parents *good* choices among *public* schools. To do that, however, new schools need to be created and old schools radically reformed, often by breaking them up into smaller, more responsive units with smaller class sizes. More classrooms have to be built and more high-quality teachers have to be hired.

Over the past century, highly bureaucratized school systems developed in our inner cities, unresponsive to the students whom they are supposed to serve. The movement to create small charter schools—sometimes as schools within a school—may be one positive step in a better direction. (I say "may be" because the educational results of charter schools are as uncertain as those of voucher schools. The advantage of charter schools is that they remain under public control, as voucher schools do not.) Charter schools have been multiplying far faster than voucher schools, and they now serve many more inner-city students. Unlike voucher schools, they are typically required to choose all their students by lottery. Their educational accomplishments (or lack thereof) warrant more attention.

This worry remains: parental choice—even

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among public schools—may drain away the best students from faltering or failing schools, creating two problems. First, the least advantaged students may be made even worse off than they otherwise would be, since these students do better (by conventional measures of educational achievement) when they attend schools with more advantaged students. Second, the education of all students suffers when schools are segregated by ability or by socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, or religious background. Integrated schools are a place where children from different backgrounds learn from each other, to respect each other.

Are these sufficient reasons to oppose parental choice among public schools? Not, I think, if some disadvantaged students will be better served than they would be by staying in their neighborhood schools. The public's obligation is to make all schools good schools (for all students), and voucher plans do not do this. But neither do public schools as they now exist, and until this obligation is honored, as many students should be as well served as possible. There is even something to be said on behalf of voucher plans that serve (some) disadvantaged students. Nobody can tell an African-American inner-city parent who wants to send her child to a better public (or private) school that her reasons are selfish, sectarian, or in any sense illegitimate. Her reasons are at least as good as the ones that lead her middle-class counterpart to move into a better school district, often in the suburbs. Moreover, there is no evidence that without public school choice, failing schools will improve faster (or at all), or that with public school choice, failing schools cannot be improved. There are ways to make schools better and to give parents choice among them—as is demonstrated, for example, by the school system of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which years ago instituted a very effective program of public school choice. But the most defensible system would not limit the choices of inner-city parents to schools in the inner city. The boundaries between city and contiguous suburbs are otherwise porous, and suburbanites, after all, draw heavily and asymmetrically upon the city's resources.

Still, public school choice is not an adequate remedy either. There is no simple or single way of improving inner-city schools. Rather there are many ways, no one of which is sufficient (and there are even more ways of creating and maintaining bad schools). Pursuing "systemic reform" is far more promising than relying on a single remedy. Some of the most promising, mutually reinforcing, improvements include decreasing class size, expanding pre-school programs, setting high standards for all students, engaging students in cooperative learning exercises, empowering principals and teachers to innovate, increasing social services offered to students and their families, and providing incentives to the ablest college students to enter the teaching profession and, in particular, to teach in inner-city schools. The list could be longer, but it cannot be formulaic. There is no mantra—whether of parental choice or democratic control. And it should always be remembered that schools educate not only by what and how they teach, but also by whom they bring together in their classrooms. We therefore need to ask, do schools educate children from many backgrounds together in the same classrooms to a high level of literacy, numeracy, economic opportunity, toleration, and mutual respect?

The persistent failure of our inner-city schools is attributable to political neglect, not public control. The privatizing impulse behind vouchers threatens to diminish any common concern about the children in our society who are most at risk and to restrict our vision of a good education for all children. Our vision will inevitably narrow if the association of children within the schools is wholly determined by the market. Bringing together children from different backgrounds is a crucial feature of democratic education.

Reasonable hope for inner-city schools rests on using the link between public funding and public oversight as a means of fulfilling our democratic obligation to offer a high-quality, socially integrated education to all children. In recent years, Americans have ranked improving education as their first or second highest priority in politics, and a majority of all citizens also say they are willing to spend more money to improve public schools. The political will of these citizens, at state and national levels, is especially critical in improving inner-

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city schools. We should therefore be wary of programs that threaten to erode public support for public schools, or that present themselves as substitutes for public judgments of every school's democratic and educational merits.

Voucher programs have both these problems. But they also offer long-awaited hope for at least some parents. If inner-city public schools do not improve and suburban schools continue to be off-bounds to inner-city parents, it will become politically harder and democratically less defensible to oppose subsidizing private schools that are willing and able to provide a better education on a nondiscriminatory basis. Some private schools in inner cities—Catholic schools especially—have demonstrated that they are able to do this for a small but significant number of inner-city students. But politicians cannot honestly offer inner-city parents hope for their children without also offering them better public schools with smaller classes, stronger principals, more dedicated teachers, more challenging curricula, and whatever else it takes to create a good school. Good schools must be created before parents can choose them. There is no evidence that vouchers will produce good schools for the vast majority of children who need them most. This democracy—if it is to be worthy of the name—needs public action to create the schools that all our children deserve. ●

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New Disciplines of Work and Welfare

Iris Young

Four years after passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, many government and media reports have declared welfare reform a success. They measure success by reduction in the number of those receiving welfare checks and to some extent by the numbers known to have left the rolls because they have gotten a job. State programs are well on their way toward moving people from welfare to work, it seems, and thereby to "self-sufficiency."

Many recipients, nonprofit service providers, and policy analysts, however, are less sanguine. States may have reduced their welfare rolls significantly, but poor tracking means they often know little about whether those no longer receiving benefits are better or worse off than before. Some may have jobs for a while, and then lose them for one reason or another; others may be terminated from programs without prospects of jobs. Some eligible people may be discouraged from applying for benefits because they believe them no longer available or because they are treated dismissively by social workers. Meanwhile, the number of people seeking help from soup kitchens and food pantries has risen steadily—even now, after the supposed miracle decade of American economic prosperity.

There are many hazards and indignities for people in the welfare system. Every state now has a more complex system of benefits and services, with changing and confusing rules. Recipients and potential recipients often sit across the desk from caseworkers who are poorly trained and overworked. Many recipients are neither treated with respect nor properly informed of their options. Many of those not eligible or no longer eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are never told that they may still be eligible for food stamps, Medicaid, child health benefits, housing subsidies, child care, or transportation assistance.

Most states require recipients of TANF to work, to attend job training or job readiness programs, or to engage in other "work activities." Although these programs increase the skills of some recipients, for many they are a waste of time because the people served already know what the programs claim to teach or because the teaching isn't thorough enough. What many recipients understandably want is the opportunity to acquire a technical skill or obtain a college degree, but most states do not count time in post–high school classes as a legitimate work activity. States require recipients to work at least twenty hours a week after two years of benefits, either at jobs they find themselves or that the welfare offices find for them. More often than not, these jobs require few skills and offer little prospect of development.

The harshness of welfare reform did bring the need for child care to the attention of legislators, and funding for child care for low-income people has increased at both federal and state levels. Even so, the dangers to children and worries for parents caused by the welfare system are frightening. I recently attended a hearing to evaluate the TANF program in Pennsylvania, at which I heard a stream of stories about the inability of mothers on public assistance to ensure that their children are well taken care of. Child care subsidies are good only for children under the age of thirteen. Teenagers in Pennsylvania apparently are expected to stay at home unsupervised for many hours of the day or night, during the years when they are most likely to slack on school work or get into trouble with the law. Mothers of older children with disabilities are sometimes forced

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to work even though they receive no help with care of their children. The child care benefits available to mothers of younger children often do not match their needs. Reimbursement checks take months to arrive, during which time mothers either forgo food to pay for child care or can't pay the caretakers, who eventually leave. Even when care is heavily subsidized, poor mothers must still pay as much as $50 per week from their own pockets. Most programs provide services only for daytime hours, forcing mothers to leave children unattended when the only jobs available require evening or night hours. Formal after-school programs for school-age children are almost nonexistent. As a result of all this, many children spend long hours home alone or their mothers fail to fulfill their work requirements, for which they are often punished.

The insistence that welfare recipients get jobs has raised important new questions about the availability of jobs and what level of pay and benefits is necessary to lift families out of poverty. If the goal of welfare policy is to make poor families self-sufficient, then their wage earners need to have jobs that pay a *living* wage, which some estimate at almost twice the minimum wage for a family of three. Self-sufficiency is a cruel joke if these jobs are not secure or if they don't provide decent working conditions and health and retirement benefits.

All these are important issues, but in this essay I want to focus on another aspect of the rhetoric and practice of welfare in the United States today. Even progressive critics, even the recipients of public assistance themselves, appear to accept the radically altered terms of the new welfare system, designed by antigovernment conservatives. Nearly everyone seems to agree that recipients of public assistance should "work," that having a job is the only meaning of "work," and that the goal of welfare programs is to make people "self-sufficient." I think that these simple propositions, on which there is wide consensus, express a damaging ideology that serves to close the universe of discourse about the respect people deserve, the meaning of work, and the aspiration for autonomy.

I borrow this phrase, "close the universe of discourse," from Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*. An important feature of what Marcuse called "one dimensional society" is that prevailing discourses referring to everyday life, politics, power, and the social relations of production and consumption are so framed that they provoke uncritical assent and acceptance by closing off the possibility of mediated reflection. One of the effects of the new welfare system is to close off argument about the meaning of autonomy and work. The system's rhetoric mystifies the idea of self-sufficiency and wrongly reduces the value of making a social contribution to having a "job." This conflation marginalizes socially valuable but unpaid activities, particularly domestic work and child rearing. It moves the dream of meaningful work out of this world.

The Ideology of Self-Sufficiency

My claim is that the welfare rhetoric of work and self-sufficiency is ideological, establishing a framework of thought that achieves wide consent but systematically distorts people's understanding of their social conditions and reinforces unjust relations of economic and social power. This ideology commands assent partly because it relies on appeals to two real values: personal autonomy and social contribution. These values are rightly implied by ideals of citizenship and dignity.

In a democratic society of equal citizens everyone ought to be autonomous in the sense of being able to determine one's own projects and goals, without having to answer for those goals to others, and without having to obey the orders of others about how one will live. An autonomous person is not dependent on another to set the direction of her life; others do not have the right to determine what is good for her. In the United States today welfare deprives people of autonomy in significant ways. The state says that because you receive aid, its agents can set specific conditions on how you will live, sometimes on where you will live. Welfare rhetoric tells poor people that they will not be treated with equal respect, as autonomous agents, until they are self-sufficient. There is an ideological slide here from autonomy to self-sufficiency. But self-sufficiency is an impossible ideal, and it is wrong to tie it to aspirations for autonomy.

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What does being "self-sufficient" mean? I suggest that it is a masculinist ideal of fending for oneself without needing to rely on the care and support of others. In this rugged individualist imagination, a person, a family, a community is self-sufficient if it can meet its own needs with minimal adjustment to the desires or actions of others. The norm of self-sufficiency harkens back to a rustic image of independent property holders who live well by working hard on their property, socializing or exchanging with others only from a desire for pleasure or edification. A dream of self-sufficiency is seductive. Wouldn't it be nice to be left alone, and not to have to anticipate the actions of others, not to depend on a web of social connection in going about one's ordinary business, and not to be answerable to others for the way one's actions affect them?

Self-sufficiency in this sense has always been a dream. In the days of the yeoman farmer or the independent artisan or manufacturer, however, it was not laughable to aspire to a condition approximating self-sufficiency. In today's very different economy, perhaps some people can be self-sufficient in this sense, but they are very few. Most people's livelihood depends on the goodwill of an organization that employs them or their family members.

When welfare rhetoric invokes self-sufficiency today, however, it doesn't mean being literally independent from engagement with others to meet one's needs. It means only having a job, and therefore according to the terms of the welfare state, no longer drawing on public funds. Even though many jobs don't pay enough to meet one's needs, are only part time, are very insecure, and make a person highly dependent on employers and co-workers, these facts are obscured by the language of self-sufficiency, which retains the sense of being able to fend for oneself and one's loved ones.

Critics of contemporary welfare policy question the equation of self-sufficiency with having a job, any job. They argue that demands and aspirations for self-sufficiency are a hoax unless former state dependents can find *good* jobs—jobs (as I've already described them) that pay a wage sufficient to support a family in a decent life, that are secure over time, have good health and retirement benefits, and decent working conditions. Welfare policy thus should be tied more broadly to employment and human capital investment—so as to raise wages, open opportunities for the acquisition of qualifications, and expand the supply of good jobs.

But it is a mistake to tie these important goals to a rhetoric of self-sufficiency. Here is how one advocacy group, the Women's Association for Women's Alternatives, which has advocated such a progressive standard, defines self-sufficiency: "The Self-Sufficiency Standard measures how much income is needed, for a family of a given composition in a given place, to adequately meet its basic needs—without public or private assistance" ("The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Pennsylvania," May 1999, p. 1). Notice the absurdity in this definition; if taken literally it would imply that those who meet their needs without relying on public or private assistance do not depend on others to ensure their subsistence. The definition makes it sound as if they just work for themselves. But of course they don't; they depend on the needs and desires of their employers for their subsistence. The viability of those employers themselves depends on often distant economic processes. Almost no one can be literally self-sufficient in this highly interdependent world of institutional supports and global markets.

Equating a right to autonomy and respect with self-sufficiency puts impossibly demanding conditions on the earning of respect. The better conceptual link is between autonomy, on the one hand, and dependence and support, on the other. Our social world is too complex, and contains too many physical, economic, and emotional hazards to expect that most people can pursue productive lives most of the time without a wide net of social supports. Almost all of us have our capacities enhanced if we get help in learning new skills and in negotiating the complexities of this society's financial and bureaucratic relations. Some people are lucky enough to have families, churches, or unions with commitments to mutual aid and resources enough to provide this support. Many people are not so lucky, however—and many of them are not "poor" by government definition.

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If we care about helping people live autonomous and productive lives, we ought to recognize the need for aid and support as the norm, and the ability to fend for oneself as the exception. A condition of the realization of autonomy for most people, at some time in their lives, is that they receive resources and/or personal assistance from others. Certain forms of dependence and interdependence, that is, should be understood as normal conditions for being autonomous.

Reduction of Work to Having a Job

The other ideological slide in contemporary welfare rhetoric equates work with a job. This equation is hardly restricted to welfare policy, it pervades the contemporary economy. It is entirely appropriate to expect people to devote thoughtful energy and skill to furthering their own well-being and that of others, that is, to make a contribution to society. This is what I mean by work. A *job*, on the other hand, is a task assigned by a powerful person for which he or she is willing to pay. It is not hard to show that having a job and making a social contribution may or may not coincide. Does helping to produce a different tasting toothpaste contribute usefully to the social good? Does spending day after day at an automatic dialing machine, occasionally persuading a consumer to switch long distance companies, expand the general welfare? Do speculators who invest in high rise office buildings that remain half empty improve society? Many jobs are arguably wasteful, even harmful in their effects.

At the same time, many unpaid or poorly paid activities contribute centrally to the social good. Paramount among these is caring for children and other family members, doing housework for them and oneself. There are many other activities that importantly contribute to society that are often not paid or poorly paid: community organizing, care of the environment, the production and dissemination of art works and performances. Students who aim to enhance their skills and capacities are also, usually, engaged in productive activity.

Welfare as we once knew it grudgingly recognized that responsible care of homes and children is work. Aid for Dependent Children and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) were programs based on the premise that children of poor parents deserve as much as others to live with and be cared for by their parents, and that public support may be necessary to make this possible. As recently as 1973 a report issued by the Nixon administration's Department of Health, Education and Welfare justified broader support for AFDC mothers on grounds that they ought to have the option to work at home taking care of their children instead of working outside the home.

The old welfare system also grudgingly allowed poor mothers to enroll in college or technical training programs, and receive benefits, sometimes for years, while increasing their qualifications. Under the new system, states have the power to set up education and training programs that develop the capacities and skills of recipients in specialized fields where there appear to be future job opportunities. They are allowed to encourage recipients to obtain post–high school associate, four-year college, or technical degrees. They can work with employers and unions to develop apprenticeship programs. Some such programs have indeed been instituted. They are rather expensive to establish and implement, however, much more expensive for each individual than the old welfare system was. And effective education and training take years. During all this time recipients are not "working," in the sense of having a job. States are permitted to design a welfare system that enables recipients to get real training and advanced education, but most don't do it.

Most states have in fact designed their welfare policies to make serious skill development extremely difficult. Like the state of Pennsylvania, they have chosen to mandate "work first" TANF programs. The dominant philosophy of public assistance says that the surest road to "self-sufficiency" is for mothers to go to a job right away, whatever their skill level, and whatever kind of job is available. In some states, a TANF recipient can attend school or a training program for no more than twelve months. Most recipients are expected to spend their time searching for low-paid, unskilled work. In fact, welfare recipients unable to find employment in the private sector increasingly work for the counties that administer their welfare, pick-

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ing up garbage and litter, cleaning office buildings, doing clerical work, and so on.

When public officials promote such "work first" policies, when community leaders applaud them and recipients are forced to accept them, the consequence is an increase in disciplinary exploitation for many. The possibility of saying no to an unacceptable job declines. Whatever is presented as a job opportunity, whatever the nature of the job, the social relations, pay, or working conditions, welfare recipients must accept. Reports from some public assistance programs suggest that cities and counties are sometimes requiring recipients to do dirty and difficult work without supplying adequate protective clothing or equipment. We've come a long way from making people break rocks for their supper.

Whatever small zone of autonomy recipients had under the old welfare system is narrowed to nearly zero in this system. Before, a poor single mother's options were limited, but the existence of a "safety net" gave her a little freedom to decide what to do. She could take care of her children at home for a while; when they got older she could combine care with her own schooling. Most people want to do meaningful and publicly recognized work, they want to meet their responsibilities to their family, and they want the freedom to decide how best to achieve both these goals. Today welfare recipients for the most part cannot decide for themselves; they must accept the only private or public job offered or lose benefits, often risking the well-being of their children in the process.

The welfare ideology that reduces work to having a job has a further consequence of making unpaid care of children or advanced training *class privileges* in a much more obvious way than before. It is fine for adults to seek higher education or technical training, but only if they are lucky enough to be able to afford it. It is valuable for parents to take care of their children at home, but only if they have a partner able to support the unpaid caregiver. No one has a right to expect material support for doing either of these things. Such an ideology widens the class privilege gap in many ways, not only for today's adults, but even more for tomorrow's. I don't mean to suggest that it is best for children to be cared for at home or that mothers should not have opportunities to work outside their homes. My own feeling is that a judicious combination of flexible job hours, quality time when parents can care for and educate their children, and out-of-home child care is best for both children and parents. My point is only that poor mothers and single mothers ought to have as much freedom as anyone else to manage the combination.

Ideals of Meaningful Work

Plenty of people who never applied for public assistance, of course, have no choice but to work at a job they find beneath their dignity, meaningless, poorly paid, with lousy working conditions. Making jobs a necessary condition for public assistance, however, further closes the universe of discourse about work. Work becomes defined as whatever an authority says it is. It becomes even more difficult than before to question the *quality* of jobs. When critics of welfare policy talk about *good* jobs, they refer to important issues like pay and working conditions. Even the most progressive critics, however, have not raised questions about what effect "work first" policies have on the quality of the *content* of work: whether the work itself is useful, engages the interest of the worker, develops his or her skills, and takes place in a context of respectful social relations. Welfare rhetoric and the ideological views it presupposes cut off discussion about whether work should be *meaningful*.

The dream of meaningful work is at least as old as socialism, perhaps as old as humanity. It is undoubtedly less a political program than an ideal, a limited concept according to which we can criticize existing social arrangements and personal situations and take action to improve them. This is the ideal: that the work people do ought to be clearly connected to social uses and recognized by others for its contribution to the well-being of men and women and their environment. Meaningful work may be hard work, and it does not need to involve sophisticated knowledge, techniques, or organizational skills. But it ought to engage a person's interest, intellect, and commitment

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in at least some of its aspects, and the worker ought to be able to take pride in the work when it is well done. It ought to contribute in determinate ways to the development of a person's capacities, either directly in the skills the work requires one to learn or indirectly in its requirements for cooperative interaction with others.

In defining meaningful work, I have tried to avoid taking either art or science or running a factory as paradigms. I am trying to formulate a more minimalist ideal, one that most people can imagine aspiring to, whatever their current education or skills. I think that even today most people yearn for meaningfulness in this sense. Yet more than ever before, it seems to me, dominant ideology and practices tell them that their yearnings are utopian.

A faith in technology led many in the mid-twentieth century to predict that automation would release workers from danger and drudgery, reduce the amount of work we all did, and transform the remaining work into pleasant, challenging, and useful activity. At the turn of the millennium, few express such hopes, for automation has been here for some time now without realizing these workplace dreams. Many workers are either monitors of machines or monitored by machines. While they must be more educated than their grandparents, their work is often routine and tedious; and there is no tangible connection between the worker and the organizational outcome of the work. Much professional work has become more high pressured and time consuming, at the same time that internal evaluations and reorganization efforts frequently seem pointless to its cubicle dwellers. Some Americans are forced to work sixty hours a week while others beg for twenty, and for most job security has decreased over the last two decades. In this context, a "good" job has come to mean one with decent pay and benefits, acceptable working conditions, and opportunities for socializing; the word "good" does not refer to the content of the work itself. The popularity of the comic strip *Dilbert* among both white- *and* blue-collar workers may indicate that many people share its cynical attitude: the work I do and the organization in which I do it are for the most part irrational and pointless.

A welfare system that puts "work first" obscures for all workers the utopian vision of being occupied with useful and challenging activity that gives one pride and recognition. Sometimes people rightly think their work is valuable, but they are the privileged few, especially if they are not forced to work under highly stressed and poorly paid conditions. Advocates of welfare justice should re-open the question of the purposes of work and its meaning, and in this way resist the narrowing of the terms of full citizenship to the acceptance of whatever tasks a powerful person assigns. We should challenge the notion that the only "real" work is a paid job and that all workers must meet the same standards of time and stress. We should refuse to agree that self-sufficiency excludes reliance on communal assistance, and we should reject an ideology that grants autonomy only to those deemed self-sufficient. We should challenge the assumption that the only way to make a social contribution is through labor market participation, and we should insist that other contributions be seriously valued. And finally, we should be prepared to face the derision of our fellow citizens by dreaming about and arguing about meaningful work. ●

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The Environment in Campaign 2000

Laying a Foundation for Citizen Activism

Ken Conca

As with so much of American politics, the environmental debate in Campaign 2000 is shaping up as a disjointed series of symbolic anecdotes. Amid the buzz about reform, the stories follow the trail of political contributions and the geography of frontline states. Al Gore hits George W. Bush in California for his stance on offshore oil drilling. Gore is pressed in Ohio about an unfulfilled 1992 campaign promise to block an incinerator near an elementary school. Both Gore and Bush lift a rhetorical shovel amid the media spectacle of Earth Day.

This pattern follows the conventional wisdom, which says that voter concern about the environment is widespread but relatively soft. Americans have strong latent anxieties that can be triggered by oil spills, nuclear accidents, rainforests in flames, toxics in the water, a hole in the ozone. But a decade of comforting claims that we can protect the environment while "growing the economy" has driven environmentalism from the ranks of issues thought to shape voting choices. Only a small slice of the electorate will vote its green passions, and it is assumed to be a captive constituency of the Democrats. Seeing no profit and much peril in making serious commitments to an energetic, progressive brand of environmentalism, Gore will slam Bush's record, make narrow pitches to swing voters, and otherwise avoid the topic.

The conventional wisdom may be right. Certainly we have seen a decline in serious discussion of environmental matters, with the limited debate that does occur largely cordoned off from questions of power, profits, and accountability. Nevertheless, there are a few wrinkles in Campaign 2000 that may create space for a more substantial airing of a green agenda. The presence of Ralph Nader may force Gore to compete for the green vote. The mounting wave of anti-globalization politics, and the struggle to tilt it Nader-leftward or Buchanan-rightward, may attract new voters in key states. The new interest in "reform" may focus attention on the connection between campaign contributions and donor interests, as in several skirmishes from the primary season. Gore has already opened the door a little. His move to exploit the growing frustration with sprawl and gridlock—through a "livability" agenda pitched to suburban swing voters—makes it possible to draw out the deeper connections among the work-time-income trap, corporate-inspired consumerism, the malling of America, and the obstacles to genuinely sustainable livelihoods for millions of Americans.

These small but hopeful opportunities come at a critical juncture for American environmental policy. The next administration will face key decisions on issues ranging from global climate change to endangered species to the environmental effects of trade. If the Democrats were to retake the House, these policy controversies would play out in a Gore presidency stripped of one of Clinton's great luxuries. By blaming an obstructionist Congress for lack of action on the green front and beating back the most egregious assaults on existing environmental regulations, Clinton gained green cover for some decidedly anti-environmental policies. Pinning Gore to the kind of specific commitments that Clinton was able to dodge in 1992 and 1996 will not in itself yield an environmental presidency, but it could help to keep a progressive environmental program in play after the election.

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The Record

Obscured by the politics of environmental anecdote are the actions, positions, and political debts that foreshadow developments in a Bush or Gore presidency. Bush's record is not complicated: he has halted the acquisition of public lands in Texas, campaigned actively against the Endangered Species Act, and replaced restrictions on development with brokered deals not subject to public scrutiny. He opposes even the modest aims of the Kyoto climate agreement, favors free trade in genetically modified foods, and has argued that environmental regulations constitute the taking of private property. Houston is now the smog capital of America, with oil refineries and other polluting industries the largest culprits. According to the League of Conservation Voters, Bush's appointments to state environmental commissions have been criticized for "strong ties to chemical, oil, and real estate interests, and in some cases their relationships to businesses regulated by the commissions." The one episode sometimes cited as a Bush accomplishment—a bill imposing tougher air-quality standards on older factories that were previously exempted by grandfather clauses—came in the wake of an EPA threat to cut off federal highway funds for non-compliance with clean-air requirements. As the campaign stands today, no major candidate since Ronald Reagan has been more closely tied to large polluters or less committed to a serious platform on environmental protection. (Not that Bush differs in these matters from the Republican center of gravity; the bizarre flirtation of many liberals with John McCain ignored a legislative record that earned a lifetime rating of 20 percent from the League of Conservation Voters.)

Gore's record on environmental issues is a more tangled tale, combining his years in Congress, his public claims to be an environmental advocate, a major book on the topic, and eight years as a key voice on environmental matters within the Clinton administration. The record is unsteady and episodic, but does contain consistent themes: extensive knowledge of the issues, seemingly real concerns tempered by expediency, and a preference to frame the problem as one of spiritual crisis and technical fixes while skirting hard questions of accountability, interests, and economic power.

The Clinton-Gore environmental record is not unlike the administration's overall pattern: rhetorical pronouncements that feel the Earth's pain, "New Democrat" repositioning in the domestic sphere, and subordination of any foreign policy agenda to international trade and investment. The core premise has been that we could have economic growth and environmental protection at the same time. In the domestic arena, this translates into a more flexible, business-friendly approach rooted in a New Democrat notion of public-private "partnership." Favored policy instruments include market mechanisms for the buying and selling of pollution rights, regulations that replace specific requirements for pollution control with more general outcome-oriented standards, and attempts to foster dialogue between industry and amenable environmentalists.

THE TREND toward market environmentalism did not begin with Clinton. And to its credit, his administration has sometimes tried to turn the market rhetoric of polluters against them, as in the effort to raise fees for mining, grazing, logging, and oil drilling on public lands from nineteenth-century levels to something nearer twenty-first-century market value. But the issue of toxics provides a good illustration of the limits of market environmentalism and new-economy boosterism. High-tech industries may constitute the brave new economy on Wall Street, but they have a decidedly old-economy habit of toxic pollution. There are twenty-nine Superfund sites in Silicon Valley, more than any other comparably sized area of the United States. The administration, citing the need for "flexible" regulation in rapidly innovating industries, has advanced programs such as the agreement the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) struck with Intel in 1996. Under this deal, Intel was no longer required to seek prior EPA approval for "routine" changes in production processes, so long as a production facility's overall emissions record was acceptable. This allows for quicker adjustment to the stream of new chemicals used in semiconductor fabrication. EPA's Toxics Release Inventory showed a slight emis-

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sions decrease from semiconductor manufacturers between 1988 and 1995—touted as evidence of an improving, self-policing industry that deserved regulatory relief to boost international competitiveness. As Jan Mazurek has shown in a carefully detailed study of the industry, however, even these modest gains are illusory, largely the product of bookkeeping artifacts and inadequate monitoring. A decidedly new-economy feature of microchip manufacturing is that much of it has been outsourced. Major Silicon Valley manufacturers have shifted production to foreign facilities that lie beyond EPA's reach or to smaller factories in the American Southwest that fly under the radar screen of EPA monitoring. Nor have the tracking devices at the chronically underfunded EPA kept pace with the hundreds of new chemicals now in widespread use.

Another problem with the market paradigm is that it stops short of "externalities" New Democrats don't want to address. Consider the combustible link between oil, cars, the military, and U.S. foreign policy. A decade after the Gulf War, America is consuming and importing oil in record amounts, with a large slice of the Pentagon budget spent on a military posture designed to keep the oil flowing. Rising military involvement in Colombia is packaged as part of the drug war—yet surely it is no accident that Colombia and neighboring Venezuela provide the United States with more than two million barrels per day of crude oil and petroleum products, more than Saudi Arabia and Kuwait combined. The threat of military intervention has become the primary working instrument of U.S. energy policy. There is a glaring market distortion here: the failure of gasoline prices to account for the enormous costs of both pollution and foreign policy militarization. During Clinton's first year in office the administration tepidly proposed a small gasoline tax—justified not as a way to break the oil-cars-war link, reduce pollution, and protect public health, but rather as a deficit reducer and global-warming measure (hence the wonkish label "BTU tax"). This dubious frame led to quick defeat in Congress, and a chastened administration soon found a safer path, conveniently free of free-market logic, providing more than a billion dollars in subsidies to Detroit, ostensibly for the purpose of developing more fuel-efficient vehicles. Despite this aid, Detroit is some years away from selling such a vehicle, while Honda and Toyota are beginning to market them in the United States this summer. Meanwhile, air-quality and fuel-economy standards remain riddled with loopholes big enough for America's burgeoning fleet of sport-utility vehicles to drive through.

IT IS IN THE international arena that the gap between administration rhetoric and action has been the largest. The United States has failed to ratify almost all the most important international environmental agreements of the past decade, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Basel agreement on the hazardous waste trade, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, and the international decertification accord. The U.S. negotiating stance typically aims to protect American corporate interests first: the biodiversity treaty was opposed as giving inadequate attention to corporate property rights, and the administration demanded that any climate agreement include extensive rights for polluters to purchase emissions reductions overseas so as to lessen the pressure to make basic changes at home. Even the one case where the United States has historically displayed something akin to leadership, the Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer, has seen dangerous slippage. The administration delayed the phase-out of methyl bromide, an important ozone-destroying chemical, and opposed tougher rules favored by the Europeans.

Delay and obstruction on these agreements stands in marked contrast to the push for accords that actively weaken environmental protections. The administration has worked for a so-called "free logging" agreement under the World Trade Organization (WTO)—even though the ban on log exports has been a key means for several developing countries to slow clear-cutting and create incentives for more sustainable forestry. More generally, the hyperliberalization of trade through the WTO undermines existing international regulations. The Basel Convention was amended in 1994 (over strong U.S. objection) to impose a ban on the trafficking of hazardous waste from the

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industrialized world to the global South. But ratification of the amendment by enough parties to bring it into force has been undermined by the threat of a challenge under WTO rules. Trade sanctions—one of the few tools of environmental regulation that consistently get the attention of governments—are effectively no longer available as a policy instrument. WTO rules also undermine national environmental policies by setting a nearly impossible standard for "proof" of environmental harm.

Gore's environmental supporters point out that he is only the vice president, that he serves under a president who has raised the art of political expediency to new heights, and that the Republican Congress limits maneuvering room. Yet by most accounts Gore has been centrally involved in the crafting of environmental policy. And Gore has earned his own reputation for expediency. As a senator he refused to support ratification of the biodiversity treaty, arguing that it might hurt the interests of American pharmaceutical firms, and thereby giving President Bush green cover to oppose signing it. After what has been described as an agonized weighing of the political ramifications, Gore did fly to Kyoto at the eleventh hour to prod the stalling climate negotiations, earning praise from the big Washington environmental groups involved in the talks. He would later face criticism from the same quarters, as the administration failed to develop a plan to implement even the modest commitments made at Kyoto.

Nor does the claim of congressional obstruction hold much water. When the political stakes have been perceived to be high, as in Kosovo, NATO expansion, or the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the administration has wielded the powers of office to get its way. On environmental matters, it was only too happy to stoke the public's fears when it served an immediate purpose in the political tussle with Newt Gingrich and the Republican Congress. Clinton, apparently with Gore's prodding, used environmental concerns in early 1995 to reverse the momentum of the Contract with America. A year later, he faced down the Republicans on appropriations riders seeking to gut the EPA's enforcement powers and Arctic wilderness protection. The problem is that these maneuvers have been purely tactical and therefore just as easily reversed. Soon after he beat back the Contract challenge, Clinton signed a disastrous appropriations rider allowing accelerated timber extraction on public lands under the guise of "forest salvage." The effectiveness of his environmental maneuvering against the Republicans undercuts claims of impotence, even as its cynicism undercuts claims of commitment to environmental protection.

Earth in the Ballots

There is also Gore's personal record to consider, beginning with his days as an ambitious young member of the House who pushed hearings on Love Canal. As Bill Bradley stressed during the primaries, Gore the legislator received only middling ratings from environmental groups and lacked a signature legislative accomplishment. Perhaps because of this, opponents and critics alike turn to the vice president's popular 1992 book, *Earth in the Balance*, for insights into the nature of his environmental concern. Here one finds a mixture of genuine insights and generalized platitudes. The book contains a surprisingly strong indictment of the spiritual bankruptcy of a consumerist, growth-oriented society—but it presents an undifferentiated, society-wide critique that ignores the specific actors and interests behind the problem. The book calls for a "global Marshall plan" to help the poor countries of the world find a greener development trajectory—but avoids serious discussion of the global trade and financial architecture that virtually ensures resource plunder. It lauds activists such as the martyred Brazilian Chico Mendes and Wangari Matthai, an organizer of tree-planting campaigns among rural Kenyan women, praising them as "a new kind of resistance fighter"—but pays no attention to the labor and democracy struggles that those activists put at the center of their grassroots environmentalism.

Gore's brand of environmentalism is very much a product of the 1980s. During that decade America's environmental movement shifted much of its attention away from the domestic clean air and clean water struggles that produced the landmark legislation of the 1970s. Ronald Reagan proved to be a

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fundraising godsend for the larger organizations, and "global issues" of climate change, the rainforests, ozone-layer destruction, and the loss of biodiversity were potent mobilizers of donations. At the same time, powerful new arguments about "sustainability" began to emerge: not all forms of economic growth were equally damaging to the environment; a pollution of poverty existed alongside a pollution of affluence; the key is not an anti-growth agenda but growth trajectories that can be sustained within nature's limits. The new thinking had positive effects in that it focused the attention of environmentalists on questions of political economy and drew them into social and ecological worlds beyond America's borders. But it also strengthened a tendency to see the problem as one of planetary systems management; a penchant for technical fixes; and a discomfort with messy underlying problems of social inequality, concentrated power, and narrow interests masquerading as the public good. With its emphasis on global issues, technical detail, and win-win opportunities among well-intentioned stakeholders, the vice president's brand of environmentalism is very much a product of these trends.

His book provides a reflective, informed, and often passionate account of threats to the planet and its people. But it lacks a political program that goes beyond general exhortation and institutional tinkering. The vice president's critics have stressed that his sense of urgency on environmental matters has since grown muted and tactical. But there never was a serious political program. It is hard to read the book and dismiss it as empty rhetoric—but just as hard to read it as a blueprint for a sustainable, socially just political economy. Proof of this is the hodge-podge of measures recommended for the "U.S. role" in global environmental protection. Gore called for new taxes on greenhouse gas emissions and the use of "virgin" materials, tighter fuel-economy standards, and accelerated phase-out of ozone-destroying chemicals. The administration has instead delayed the phase-out for an important class of ozone-harming chemicals, dodged the question of fuel standards, and avoided any discussion of taxes since the BTU tax fiasco. Yet even if these sensible measures had found their way into policy with Gore as their champion, they fall far short of a systematic program to address the problems identified in his book.

What to Do?

A central question in the run-up to November is whether pressure from a variety of sources—environmentalists, labor, local candidates, community movements, the progressive media—can force candidate Gore into commitments that change the terms of the post-election struggle. Those pressures are needed whether progressive voters ultimately swallow hard and pull the lever for Gore, fall in behind Nader, or stay home in favor of local struggles. As of this writing, little has been done to extract such public commitments. Perhaps fearing that the "ozone man" label will return to haunt him, perhaps confident that Bush's sorry record leaves the green vote captive, Gore has avoided sketching a comprehensive environmental platform. He remains on safe ground, tweaking Bush and stoking the desires of swing-voting suburban commuters for a "livability" agenda on sprawl, transit, and green spaces.

The media seem disinclined to dislodge him from this comfortable space. Nor will pinning down candidate Gore be done by major national environmental organizations. They seem inclined to get Gore elected and hope that his knowledge and their access will place him on the green side (at least as they see it) more often than his New Democrat instincts will push him the other way. The majors seem to be falling in line, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Environmental Defense (known until recently as the Environmental Defense Fund) has been on board all along, lauding the vice president's anti-sprawl proposals and repeatedly providing green cover for the administration on free-trade policy. EDF gave the Clinton administration a "B for effort" on trade issues simply for announcing that the U.S. Trade Representative's office would be required to assess the environmental impact of trade agreements—as if such assessments, coming from an office with a free-trade mandate and ideology, would not be a foregone conclusion. The Web site of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) offers a biography of the vice president that calls him a "staunch

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advocate for environmental reforms" and features a celebrity profile of actor Rob Reiner describing Gore as one of his "environmental heroes." (Unable to provide NRDC with a favorite environmental quote, Reiner opined, "Maybe that's the problem with the environmental movement: we don't have enough flashy, pithy quotes.") The Sierra Club is a tougher sell, given that it has an active membership base instead of just a fund-raising list; local chapters tend to be wary of compromise by the Washington office and inclined to air out national political strategy in public debate. Thus far the club has been content to lead the campaign debunking Bush's allegations of environmental accomplishment. Only Friends of the Earth—which embarrassed Gore by slamming the administration's record and coming out for Bradley before the primaries—consistently takes the gap between Clinton-Gore rhetoric and accomplishment as its starting point.

IT REMAINS unclear whether the combination of Nader's presence, the growing movement against corporate globalization, an array of progressive congressional candidates, and the inadequacy of Gore's tepid "livability" agenda can overcome these inertial tendencies. But if they can, what should the agenda be? If pressing for commitments now can help set the terms of the post-election fight, what are the commitments for which to press? What follows is not a complete agenda, but rather a set of specific suggestions that link concerns for environmental protection with core progressive themes: social and economic injustice, political unaccountability, the use of public power for private gain, and the limits of liberal tinkering in the face of these ills.

One crucial domain is the struggle to make environmental protection and enforcement meet standards of socio-economic justice. A decade after they burst on the scene, movements for environmental justice—ranging from communities of color fighting toxic facilities to farmworkers battling the health effects of pesticides—remain the best hope of infusing environmentalism with a consistently progressive ethic. Clinton signed an executive order directing the EPA to take into account the distributive effects of pollution across different social groups. But the order lacks any statutory basis, and thus has no teeth. What specific steps would a Gore presidency take to ensure that the EPA and the Department of Justice act as aggressively on enforcement of environmental law and prosecution of environmental crimes in minority communities as they do elsewhere? As Chris Foreman of the Brookings Institution has pointed out, none of the dozens of environmental-justice grievances examined by the EPA has been found to deserve relief under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which bars discriminators from federal funds. Does candidate Gore support a statutory link between Clinton's executive order and the Civil Rights Act?

It would also be useful to hold the vice president's feet to the fire on the efficiency rhetoric of market environmentalism. Friends of the Earth, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, and several other groups have launched a series of "Green Scissors" reports that target federal pollution subsidies. The latest report identifies seventy-seven environmentally harmful federal programs in energy, public lands, water, agriculture, and transportation. These programs, ranging from support for the nuclear and coal industries to the paving of logging roads on federal lands, dole out nearly $50 billion in outright subsidies or expenditures that serve private interests. Which of these programs would remain in the first budget Gore sent to Congress? Would he strengthen currently anemic funding levels for pollution monitoring, enforcement, and the prosecution of environmental crimes?

A third important avenue is a specific commitment to comply with global standards. Would Gore as president demand a timetable for Senate votes on the key environmental treaties the United States has refused to ratify? Would he carry the debate to the public and expend the political capital needed to win those fights? Does he accept the growing consensus that the NAFTA side agreements on environmental protection have been ineffective? If so, why would he expect similar arrangements to work on a global scale within the WTO? Does he agree with current WTO rules that force proponents of environmental regulation to meet a Herculean standard of incontrovertible

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proof of environmental harm, or would he favor shifting the burden of proof onto those who would gut the regulations?

A fourth key area, linking the domestic and international spheres, is the oil-cars-war link described above. Would a Gore presidency push serious energy conservation in the transportation sector as a way to protect public health, reduce pollution, and demilitarize U.S. foreign policy? Would he match his zeal for the virtual infrastructure of the Internet with a real infrastructure of efficient public transit? Should Detroit be subsidized to develop more fuel-efficient vehicles on its own timetable, or required to comply with stronger fuel-economy and pollution-control standards that are easily achievable with existing technology? Does the vice president's "livability" agenda for the suburbs address the hidden crisis of livability in urban and rural areas in the wake of corporate flight, downsizing, and public disinvestment?

If it would be naive to put too much hope in a Gore presidency, it would be cynical to see no difference on green matters between Gore and Bush. Both candidates recognize this; neither competes for the serious green vote that is assumed to belong to Gore. But history shows that, even though environmentalists may act as a captive constituency of the Democratic Party, environmental politics is not similarly captive. Nixon signed more pieces of landmark environmental legislation than any president since Theodore Roosevelt—despite apparently believing that the first Earth Day was a Soviet plot (falling as it did on Lenin's birthday). Despite Dan Quayle's anti-regulatory Council on Competitiveness, Bush the elder signed amendments that strengthened the Clean Air Act. The strongest international environmental agreement to date, on protecting the stratospheric ozone layer, came during Reagan's second term. By contrast, Jimmy Carter sought to clear away environmental "red tape" during the energy crisis, and Clinton shepherded NAFTA and the WTO against any threat of meaningful environmental constraints.

None of this is to suggest that the outcome of the election makes no difference. But it underscores an important lesson: strong public concern mobilized by effective political organizing and pressure from below are the keys to genuine environmental protection. History shows that both parties can be moved by such tactics, and that both are fully capable of ignoring a progressive green agenda if not pressed in that direction. ●

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Why America's Workers Can't Pay the Rent

Peter Dreier

Hector Cuatepotzo, a waiter at the upscale Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica, California, and an active member of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union, lives in a tiny one-bedroom apartment with his wife, Maria, six-year-old daughter, Ashley, and infant, Bryan, who was born last October.

All four sleep in the same small room. Bryan's crib is nestled in one corner, Ashley's bed sits in another, and the parents' bed in another. The sixty-six-unit building, located in a rundown neighborhood in Los Angeles, has no place—inside or outside—for the children to play. Several times Hector has asked the manager not to yell at Ashley for running in the hallways. Hector often has to fix leaky faucets and the toilet himself because the manager claims the handyman is unavailable. Hector also painted the walls and cleaned the carpet himself because the landlord refused to do so. Hector earns about $20,000 a year in salary and tips (about $10 an hour, almost twice the state minimum wage). But with $625 a month in rent and another $80 monthly for gas and electricity, the Cuatepotzo family spends more than 40 percent of its income on housing. Hector works the 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift and travels forty miles a day to work and back because rents are even higher in buildings closer to his job.

Even when Maria was working as a cashier for Pollo Loco, before Bryan was born, the Cuatepotzos had problems paying the rent. Since then, things have gotten worse. The family has received several eviction notices for late payment, though each time Hector persuaded the landlord to let them remain after they borrowed money and paid. After paying for food, gas and car repairs, and other necessities, the family has no money left and is frequently in debt. Thanks to Hector's union, the family has medical insurance, but it doesn't include dental coverage. Hector's thinking about getting a second job, but that would mean he'd hardly ever see his children. Hector, who has worked at the Miramar since he arrived from Mexico ten years ago, would like to own his own home someday. "It's my dream," he says. But he can't imagine how he'll ever get there when his family lives paycheck to paycheck and can't put anything away for savings.

Hector is one of a growing number of American workers —even union members—who can't afford to pay the rent. Despite the strong economy and low unemployment rate, working families face a severe shortage of affordable housing. Wages are rising, but housing costs are spiraling upward even faster. This situation shows that a "rising tide" not only doesn't lift all boats, instead it raises rents and home prices. Moreover, if income disparities continue to widen, disparities in housing conditions will widen too.

In fact, according to a new study prepared by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, there's no city in the entire country where a family living on the minimum wage can afford a typical apartment. The report compared the federal minimum wage ($5.15 per hour) to rents across the nation. In seventy metropolitan areas, minimum-wage workers would have to work more than a hundred hours a week to afford market rents in their area—that is, to pay no more than 30 percent of their income for housing.

In some cities, of course, the "housing wage" is much higher. In San Francisco, for example, a typical two-bedroom costs $1,167 per month. The housing wage required to afford this typical apartment is more than $30 per hour. Wherever they live, working fami-

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lies—even those such as the Cuatepotzos who make far more than the minimum wage—face a housing squeeze. Housing is the most expensive part of all working families' budgets.

The most telling indicator of the housing shortage is the gap between the number of low-income households and the number of rental units affordable by the poor. In 1970, there were 6.5 million low-cost units and 6.2 million low-income renter households—300,000 more low-cost rental units than low-income renters. Today, the gap has reached a record level of 4.4 million units—10.5 million poor renters and 6.1 million low-income units. Waiting lists for subsidized housing are huge and growing. The Cuatepotzos are eligible for federal housing subsidies, but the wait to get a unit in Los Angeles is typically five years or more. Nationwide, more than 80 percent of poor renters—six million households—spend at least 30 percent of their income on rent and utilities. Fifty-nine percent of poor renters—4.4 million households—spend more than half of their income just to keep a roof over their heads.

Many working families—even those with incomes above the official poverty line—have serious housing problems. According to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), about 2.4 million working renter households with incomes under $25,000 spend more than half of their incomes on housing or live in severely substandard housing. And almost four million homeowners with comparable incomes face similar housing problems. Moreover, according to HUD, the housing situation of the working poor has been growing worse.

THE HIGH COST of rental housing makes it difficult, if not impossible, for many families to save enough money for a down payment on a home. Although the nation's overall homeownership rate is now at an all-time high, this is primarily because people over age fifty-five—the pre-baby boom generation—purchased their homes when housing was more affordable. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, among every age group under fifty-five, the homeownership rate has actually declined since the late 1970s. For example, the homeownership rate among the thirty to thirty-four age group was 62.4 percent in 1978 and 53.6 percent twenty years later. Even those who purchase homes find themselves overextended. In late 1999, American households had an unprecedented level of debt, according to the Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finance.

This housing crisis has serious short- and long-term consequences. To name a few:

- Low-wage workers often find themselves paying more than half their household incomes in rent and still living in slum buildings. Millions of Americans live in overcrowded buildings with serious health and safety problems. According to a recent report by the Citizens Task Force on Slum Housing, in Los Angeles at least 150,000 apartments—one in nine—is substandard.
- Working families that pay too much for housing have less disposable income to spend on other goods and services, including other basic necessities such as food and health care. This undermines the economic health of local businesses and neighborhoods.
- Rising housing costs require low- and middle-income workers to live farther and farther from their job sites, increasing traffic congestion and pollution.
- The shortage of affordable housing undermines the local business climate and makes it difficult to attract and retain an adequate workforce.

Working families need help paying the rent—or buying a home. But contrary to conventional wisdom, federal housing programs are not geared toward assisting the poor or toward average working families. In fact, the United States provides fewer housing subsidies for the poor than any other major democratic nation. Federal housing assistance for the poor is not an entitlement, as is the case with food stamps or Medicaid. The available funds serve a small portion of those who meet eligibility criteria. Only one-quarter of the sixteen million low-income renter households eligible for federal housing assistance receive any subsidies. About 1.2 million households live in units owned by local public housing authorities; 1.4 million households live in private, government-subsidized developments owned by private or non-profit entities; and 1.5 million households re-

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ceive tenant-based rental certificates or vouchers that allow them to pay for private rental units.

This leaves almost twelve million poor households eligible for federal housing subsidies who do not receive them. They have to fend for themselves in the private marketplace. Moreover, the problem is getting worse as the gap between the number of poor people and the number of low-cost private apartments has widened during the past three decades.

Federal housing assistance for the poor (administered primarily by HUD) reached a peak in the late 1970s, declined sharply during the Reagan and Bush years, and increased slightly during the Clinton years. The federal budget for low-income housing was slashed from $54 billion in 1980 to $13 billion in 1988 in inflation-adjusted 1999 dollars. It has since climbed back up to about $20 billion, but this is far below earlier levels. During that period, HUD shouldered more cuts than any other domestic agency.

The nation's housing program for the middle class involves government-backed mortgage insurance administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the creation of a secondary mortgage market to buy mortgage loans from banks and replenish the supply of mortgage credit (administered by the Federal National Mortgage Association, known as Fannie Mae). During the 1950s and 1960s, the FHA practiced redlining, refusing to insure mortgages in many cities, which helped to fuel the middle-class exodus to the suburbs and contributed to the decline of many cities and urban neighborhoods.

Organized labor has not only been a key supporter of these homeownership programs, but has helped lobby Congress to require FHA and Fannie Mae to target their programs to families and communities with modest incomes and minority areas redlined by major banks. Today, these two programs reduce the cost of homeownership so that families earning about $40,000 can purchase a home in some parts of the country. But this strategy is less effective in areas where home prices are high.

America's largest housing program, however, primarily benefits the wealthy. The nation's tax system allows homeowners to deduct both mortgage interest and property tax payments from their federal taxes. Last year this cost Uncle Sam more than $63 billion in lost revenues. That's about three times the size of the entire HUD budget. These tax breaks disproportionately benefited those with the largest homes and the highest incomes. The wealthiest 1.5 percent of all taxpayers (those with incomes over $200,000) received more than one-fifth of the $63 billion in homeowner tax breaks. Three-quarters of the wealthiest families received a tax break—an average of more than $8,000 per family. Most middle-class families received little or nothing. Only 15 percent of families earning $30,000 to $40,000, and only 25 percent of families earning $40,00 to $50,000 received part of this homeowner subsidy. Those who did received an average of about $700 per year. Poor homeowners don't qualify for a tax break, and poor renters are shut out of this system altogether.

THIS SYSTEM is not only unfair, it's inefficient. The homeowner tax break hardly affects a wealthy family's decision to purchase a home. By contrast, families with average incomes receive hardly enough government help to buy a modest bungalow. It is revealing that Canada has no comparable tax breaks for homeowners and its homeownership rate is about the same as the United States. But Canada has a much larger and more politically powerful labor movement, which has played a major role in improving the housing conditions of the Canadian population. Canada's cities have no slums and far fewer homeless people. Its average workers are better housed than their American counterparts south of the border.

In other words, many working families—with and without union contracts—fall between the cracks of federal housing policy. They earn slightly too much to be eligible for many HUD programs for the poor, but they don't earn enough to take advantage of FHA mortgages or homeowner tax breaks.

The deepening housing problems among workers with modest incomes should push organized labor to make housing policy a priority

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once again. Again? In fact, unions were once at the forefront of the fight for decent housing. As early as 1914, at the American Federation of Labor's annual convention, unions called for government action to provide workers with low-cost housing loans. In the 1920s, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union sponsored cooperative housing projects for its garment-worker members in New York City. Several unions established banks, credit unions, and building-and-loan societies to offer low-interest mortgages to members. Until the depression, however, most American opinion leaders believed that the private market—with a helping hand from private philanthropy—could meet the nation's housing needs. Reformers who wanted the government to play a major role in housing were rare. The economic collapse of the depression provided reformers with a political opening to push the radical idea that the federal government should subsidize "social housing" and help create a noncommercial sector free from profit and speculation. Like their European counterparts, these reformers envisioned home ownership for the middle class as well as the poor.

Most depression-era unions had housing committees devoted to lobbying for government action. Based in part on the success of the garment workers housing cooperatives, unions pushed President Roosevelt and Congress to create a housing division within the Public Works Administration to make loans for housing cooperatives built by nonprofit groups and unions. The program helped finance 3,123 housing units in seven projects, including the 284-unit Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia sponsored by the Hosiery Workers Union. These homes—which still exist—were spacious and well designed, with playgrounds for children, art and education programs for tenants, and lots of political activity.

Union leaders and housing reformers (including Catherine Bauer, who led the Labor Housing Conference and is the subject of two fascinating new books*) hoped to turn these prototype projects into a permanent, large-scale government housing program for working-class families that would both create jobs and provide decent housing. The unions and housing reformers battled with the private real estate industry, which feared competition from well-designed government-subsidized housing. Warning about the specter of "socialism," the homebuilders, realtors, and banks fought vigorously against any public housing program at all. The Public Housing Act of 1937 was a compromise. (The law was sponsored by Senator Robert Wagner [D-N.Y.], a close friend of organized labor who had also sponsored the National Labor Relations Act, often called the Wagner Act, which gave workers the right to unionize.) The unions achieved their goal of a government-subsidized housing program, but the provision for union-sponsored housing cooperatives was eliminated. More important, the real estate lobby pressured Congress to limit public housing to the poor (so it wouldn't compete with private builders) and to give local governments discretion over where the housing would be located. The lobby also pressured Congress to provide only enough funding for the design and building of unattractive, box-like structures. From its inception, public housing was stigmatized as housing of last resort. Today, it represents only about 1 percent of the nation's housing stock. Only the poorest of the poor—and few, if any, union members—now live in public housing. The average annual income for families living in public housing is $9,500.

DURING THE postwar boom years, organized labor continued to support federal assistance for low-income housing but also pushed for government-backed low-cost mortgages (through the Federal Housing Administration, now a branch of HUD) for the increasingly middle-class union members. In the early 1950s, unions in New York formed the United Housing Foundation, which built thousands of cooperative apartments for moderate-income workers until the early 1970s. In 1965, the United Auto Workers formed the Watts Labor Community Action Committee in Los Angeles's black community and the East Los Angeles Community Union in the city's

*Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era*, University of Chicago Press, 1996; and H. Peter Oberlander and Eva Newbrun, *Houser: The Life and Work of Catherine Bauer*, University of British Columbia Press, 1999.

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Latino neighborhood, which, along with a variety of other job-training and small business programs, sponsored several hundred units of housing for low- and moderate-income people. A few other unions, including the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the Communications Workers of America, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and the Bricklayers, have also used a combination of union pension funds and government subsidies to create housing.

In the late 1980s, Boston's HERE Local 26 surveyed its members and found that their biggest problem was the city's skyrocketing housing costs. In its next contract negotiations, the union won a "housing trust fund," which required employers to pay seven cents per hour into a fund that would be used to meet members' housing needs. When the hotel owners' association claimed that the union had no legal authority to do so, Local 26 led a successful campaign to amend the nation's labor laws in 1990 to allow unions and employers to provide housing assistance to workers under collective bargaining agreements. Few unions, however, have utilized this provision to bargain for housing benefits—whether employer-sponsored mortgage assistance or rent subsidies.

Currently, organized labor's biggest involvement in housing is through the AFL-CIO's Housing Investment Trust (HIT). Since 1981, it has invested over $3 billion in union pension funds in a variety of housing developments. Last year alone, the HIT invested more than $488 million in housing projects—both rental and homeownership—with over 4,500 units. Many of HIT's projects involve the growing number of non-profit community development corporations in cities around the country. But even the HIT typically needs federal government subsidies to make this housing affordable to families with modest incomes. And it is no coincidence that the decline of organized labor's membership and political clout during the past few decades has coincided with the sharp drop in federal housing assistance for low- and moderate-income families.

Today, housing is a serious problem but barely recognized as a political issue. Housing policy lacks a coherent and well-organized political constituency. For the most part, the key constituencies for federal housing policy are big-city mayors and local government housing bureaucrats; private housing developers, landlords, and speculators; and community organizing groups and community development organizations. These constituencies are often at odds over major issues. Progressive housing advocates have such low expectations that token gains—such as an additional sixty thousand housing vouchers in the latest budget—are greeted as major victories.

By far the most significant missing component in the political coalition for housing is organized labor, the one constituency with large membership, a progressive policy agenda, significant financial resources, and the potential to engage in effective mobilization. It is also the one major political vehicle with the potential for organizing effectively across racial lines, across income groups from the very poor to the middle class, and across city and suburban boundaries. Indeed, it is unlikely that a renewal of progressive politics is possible in the United States without a stronger labor movement.

Union strength, which reached a peak of 35 percent in the mid-1950s, allowed American workers, especially blue-collar workers, to share in the postwar prosperity and join the middle class. Union pay scales even helped boost the wages of nonunion workers. Unionized workers continue to have higher wages, better pensions, longer vacations and maternity leaves, and better health insurance than their nonunion counterparts. In general, union members have better housing conditions than nonunionized workers. For example, about 75 percent of current union members own their own homes, compared with the national average of almost 67 percent.

Unions are also a force for greater economic and racial equality. In unionized firms, the wage gap between black and white workers is narrower than elsewhere. Whites and blacks not only earn roughly the same wages, they both earn more than workers without union representation. Unionized black males earn 15.1 percent more than black people in comparable nonunion jobs; for whites, the union "wage premium" is 14.9 percent. It is

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18.7 percent for Latinos. From the 1970s through the 1990s, union membership has declined precipitously, reaching 15 percent of the workforce in 1998, the lowest since the Great Depression. This erosion is a major reason for the nation's declining wages and widening economic disparities.

A new cohort of labor leaders at both the national and local levels—reflected in John Sweeney's election as AFL-CIO president four years ago—is now seeking to rekindle the "movement" spirit of activist unionism, in part by focusing on the low-wage sectors, made up disproportionately of women, people of color, and immigrants. In recent years, local union-community-clergy coalitions have worked successfully to enact living wage laws in more than thirty cities. Organized labor created the Union Summer program and gave key support to the burgeoning campus antisweatshop movement. Labor's efforts to successfully mobilize members for key congressional races in the 1996 and 1998 elections helped to narrow the GOP's grasp on Congress and helped turn back the Gingrich revolution. All these trends suggest that the Sweeney regime has already helped change the political culture of the union movement. In recent years, union membership has grown slightly, although it has not increased as fast as the size of the workforce.

Now that organized labor is on the rebound, it should play an important role in reshaping the nation's housing policies and improving the housing standards of America's working families. One welcome sign was Sweeney's presence at the September 1999 press conference announcing the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach* report, documenting the wide gap between minimum-wage incomes and housing costs.

Getting unions more engaged in housing must start at the grassroots level, with housing advocates building relationships with local unions, working on issues central to labor groups (such as local living wage laws and organizing drives) and housing groups alike. At the same time, national housing and union organizations can begin working on common concerns, such as efforts to raise the minimum wage and fight for universal health insurance.

In the Los Angeles area, for example, HERE Local 814 is working closely with the Community Corporation of Santa Monica (CCSM), a local nonprofit community development group, to help members with their housing problems. The HERE/CCSM collaboration has helped union members find, apply for, and qualify for subsidized and market-rate rental housing. It provides a referral system for members to get homeownership assistance and an information network to educate members about their rights as tenants. Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Boston and other cities have adopted "linked deposit" policies that require the local government to issue a report card on local banks, identifying lenders that fail to invest in urban neighborhoods. Unions can piggy-back on these programs to make sure that banks where they deposit union funds are not redlining working-class neighborhoods and are making loans to union members and nonprofit groups that build low-cost housing.

Unions can also join housing groups to push for municipal housing trust funds and state housing bonds that provide resources for developing affordable housing. Local unions can also help community-based nonprofit housing developers identify good union contractors so that they can get the most out of paying prevailing wages.

At the federal level, there's a need for unions to push to expand the HUD budget, particularly to provide funding for construction of affordable housing and for more Section 8 housing vouchers. This would help expand the good work of the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust, which formed a partnership with HUD to link union pension investments with federal housing assistance. Additionally, pressure from unions could also push for a revision of federal tax laws to enact a progressive homeownership tax credit. Unlike the current approach, this credit would provide a tax break to working-class families who need help with down payments and monthly mortgage payments.

Finally, unions can push for a strengthening of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), the federal anti-redlining law that has primarily been used by community groups to pressure banks to provide more home mortgage

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loans to working-class families. Under the CRA, federal regulators can punish a bank that persists in mortgage discrimination. But unions could push to expand the CRA into new areas—for example, by looking at whether banks make loans to corporations that use sweatshops or export jobs overseas.

In 1948, President Harry Truman made addressing the postwar housing shortage a key part of his come-from-behind re-election campaign. He declared that the Republicans should update their slogan of "two cars in every garage" to "two families in every garage." "There is nothing more un-American than a slum," he proclaimed in a typical campaign speech. "How can we expect to sell democracy to Europe until we prove that within the democratic system we can provide decent homes for our people?"

Once again America faces a serious housing crisis. But we can't expect Truman's style of leadership without well-organized grassroots pressure. Organized labor has a crucial role in rebuilding the political coalition that can fight for decent housing for all Americans. ●

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Fool's Gold of the Left

Misplaced Hope for Voter Turnout

Ruy Teixeira

WHO ARE the nonvoters? Although they can be found in every stratum of society, there is no doubt they are disproportionately poor, less educated, black, and Hispanic—generally viewed as liberal and Democratic-leaning groups. Moreover, this bias, at least in terms of class, has been getting worse over time. Since nonvoters are now over half the potential (age-eligible) electorate, even in presidential elections (they are almost two-thirds in off-year elections), these well-known characteristics of nonvoters have led many on the left to conclude that the key to realigning American politics is getting more of them to the polls. More nonvoters voting would mean substantially more voters who are liberal-leaning, which would mean, in turn, substantially more liberal politics and politicians.

A simple and compelling story. Too bad it's wrong—not only wrong, but positively harmful. Increasing turnout is the fool's gold of the left and diverts attention from the real challenge faced by any sort of progressive politics: winning over more white, working-class voters to the side of active, strong government. But as long as people on the left can convince themselves that getting more of those pesky nonvoters to the polls will solve America's political problems, they can avoid this rather thorny and uncomfortable challenge.

There are a number of reasons why a strategy based on generally increasing turnout just won't work (in the sense of producing substantially more liberal political outcomes), including: (1) the nonvoting pool, while not a faithful representation of the entire population, is hardly a monolith of the disadvantaged; (2) partisan biases by class, especially compared to other countries, are not overwhelming (biases in political attitudes even less so), so the relatively poor and less educated nature of the nonvoting pool doesn't make it as liberal as people generally suppose; (3) nonvoters' policy preferences, controlled for demographics, are remarkably similar to voters'; (4) nonvoters are particularly likely to disregard partisan and other preferences and surge in the direction of the candidate who appears to be winning; and (5) for mathematical reasons, it is a great deal easier to change an election outcome by switching the preferences of existing voters than by adding new voters. (All of these points are developed in detail in my 1992 Brookings book, *The Disappearing American Voter.*)

Defenders of the turnout thesis might say, "OK, maybe general mobilization of nonvoters won't do the trick, so we'll be selective. Instead of trying to bring all the nonvoters to the polls, we'll concentrate on expanding the Democratic/liberal base: union household members, blacks, and Hispanics [currently about one-third of all voters]." But this strategy also faces severe limitations.

Take union household voters: increasing their turnout rates would surely be an unambiguous good for progressives. The problem is that they are already well mobilized. Union household turnout rates in 1998, for example, were 53 percent, compared to 40 percent among the voting-age population as a whole and just 37 percent for nonunion voters. Even after controlling for education, income, race, and other characteristics, there's still a substantial union effect on participation—union voters, all else equal, simply participate more.

Although this is good news for Democrats, there are limits to how much bigger a payoff the party can get from this voter group. Could union household participation be driven to 75 percent or 85 percent? Possibly, but it would mean that these voters would have to increase

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their already high turnout rates by twenty to twenty-five percentage points—a very tough proposition.

Increasing union turnout rates by even modest amounts in individual elections is not that easy. The AFL-CIO tried very hard to do that in 1998 and pointed to exit-poll data that showed that the proportion of union household voters increased from 14 percent in 1994 to 23 percent in 1998. However, as the Voter News Service exit pollsters have themselves acknowledged, most of this change is probably attributable to changes in their question in 1998, which made it more likely that union household voters would report their union affiliation. This interpretation is supported by Bureau of the Census data that show turnout among union members actually declining from 1994 to 1998, pretty much in line with the population-wide decline in turnout between the two elections. Moreover, both Census data and National Election Study (NES) data, where question wording has been stable, show the union percent of voters fluctuating in a narrow range between 1988 and the present (17 percent to 21 percent in the Census data, 18 percent to 21 percent in the NES data).

This doesn't mean that union turnout rates can't be bumped up in particular elections or, especially if the election is close one, that they can't play a very important role. But it seems unlikely and infeasible that dramatically *increased* union turnout will play more than a minor role in enlarging the current progressive coalition.

Then again, Democrats might try to increase the number of people in union households by making it easier for workers to join unions. Historically, the real change over time in the political role of union voters has been driven neither by declining Democratic support rates nor by declining turnout rates, but by the declining relative weight of unions in the workforce and therefore in American society as a whole. Turning this trend in the other direction would be a considerable boon to the Democrats. For example, the percentage of the workforce that was unionized in 1960 was at least nine points higher than it is today, and the share of union household members among voters was, in rough correspondence, about seven points higher. At current rates of partisan loyalty, making up that post-1960 decline in union household voters would produce a corresponding increase in the average Democratic vote of around one percentage point, in both the congressional and presidential vote. If we assume that what the Democrats need is to raise their average percentage of the vote from current levels (49 percent to 50 percent) to a "normal" level of perhaps 53 percent, such an increment makes a substantial contribution to getting them there.

EASIER SAID than done, however. Given the very modest progress of even the new leaders of the AFL-CIO in increasing union density (so far, they have only managed to slow and, most recently, stop the *decline* in unionization), a blueprint for a new progressive majority should not count on much beyond the current base of union household voters to work with. In the end, it is certainly possible that increased organizing efforts may yield a significant dividend of increased unionization and consequently increased union voters. But a serious progressive strategy must be based on reaching the current electorate, not a projected future one.

Black voters offer a similarly limited resource for Democrats and progressives. Their staunch support for the Democratic Party is one of the great, undisputed political facts of our time. Election after election, for offices high and low, black voters overwhelmingly support Democrats by 80 percent to 90 percent or more. Given these support levels, it's close to pure electoral gold for the Democrats to increase the black vote. But how possible would this be on a regular basis?

A perennial source of Democratic hope, black turnout is just as perennially misunderstood. After the 1996 presidential election, for example, some argued that black *male* turnout had taken a huge jump, underscoring the possibilities of a mobilization strategy. But these data, based on exit polls, were contradicted by the more reliable Census data showing that black male turnout actually declined (by four points, a bit more than the three-point decline among black women). And the voting share of black men remained about the same: 4 percent

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of the active electorate.

Similarly, 1998 was generally considered to be an exceptionally good year for black turnout, as blacks mobilized against the Republican Congress and in support of President Clinton. But the overall increase in turnout was only about three percentage points more than in 1994, and the increase in black representation among voters was about half that. That was still an impressive performance in a year in which overall turnout went down, but it illustrates just how difficult it is to produce a large overall increase, even in a favorable situation where mobilization efforts are deemed successful. (Large increases in particular state or local races are a different issue.)

Part of the reason for this is that blacks are no longer as underrepresented as they used to be among voters, and it is therefore more difficult to produce large increases in turnout—the easiest voters to mobilize have already been mobilized. Consistent with this, the turnout rate of blacks in 1998 was only two percentage points lower than the rate of the population as a whole. This difference was small enough that, even with this somewhat lower turnout rate, the representation of blacks among voters and among the age-eligible electorate was roughly equal (about 11 percent in each case). Indeed, controlling for other demographics (education, income, and so on), data from this and other elections show that blacks are, at this point, more likely, not less likely, to vote than whites.

And so with blacks, as with union household members, it's not plausible to think that their participation rates could be increased dramatically. In addition, they remain a relatively small part of the U.S. electorate—just over one-tenth—so the impact of whatever turnout increases can be generated will be further limited. Blacks are clearly a central part of the Democratic base, and it's essential that the Democrats retain them. But they do not provide the answer to the quest for a new coalition.

Although the support of Hispanics for Democrats has been considerably less staunch than that of blacks, and in some areas (for example, Florida) is in fact quite weak, overall support levels of Hispanics for Democrats are still quite high—in the 60 percent to 70 percent range. Given these support levels, expanding Hispanic representation among active voters would be a clear boon to Democrats. But, again, how much and how fast could this representation be increased?

An optimistic answer to the first part of this question was suggested by reports of dramatically increased Hispanic turnout in the 1996 election. According to widely cited data from exit polls, Hispanic representation among voters almost doubled (from 2.3 percent in 1992 to 4.5 percent in 1996). This implied a strong increase in Hispanic turnout of seven percentage points (in an election where overall turnout went *down* six points) and an overall increase in the Hispanic vote of almost two million. But again, the more reliable Census data suggest that the change in the Hispanic vote was much less dramatic. Indeed, as with blacks, the Census data say that Hispanic turnout actually went *down* by a couple of percentage points.

Because Hispanics increased their proportion of the population between 1992 and 1996 and because Hispanic turnout went down *less* than the rest of the population in an abysmally low turnout year, they still increased their share in the electorate—albeit more modestly than exit polls suggested—from just under 4 percent to just under 5 percent (an increase of about 700,000 votes overall and just 156,000 votes in California, where the most dramatic changes in the Hispanic vote were supposed to have occurred).

The 1998 Census data tell essentially the same story. Despite reports of a huge surge in the Hispanic vote, again usually based on exit-poll findings, the Census data indicate modest increases of about a percentage point compared with 1994 voting levels, both in Hispanic turnout and in their share of active voters.

In the long run though, Hispanics' growing share of the population *will* substantially increase their share of the active electorate. According to Census projections, the Hispanic share of the voting-age population should grow more than 50 percent over the next two decades—rising from a little under 10 percent today to about 12 percent in 2008, finally reaching 15 percent by the year 2020. As a very

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rough estimate, this might increase the Hispanic share of the voting electorate to about 8 percent. At present rates of partisan support, this should—as with our presumptive restoration of unions to their 1960s levels, but with a lot more confidence in the growth of the underlying base—increase the average Democratic share of the vote by about one percentage point. Again, such an increase would be significant in the context of developing a normal national Democratic vote of around 53 percent and, given the regional concentration of Hispanics, would have larger effects in several Southwestern and Western states.

But these are long-run changes. In the short run, the basic racial structure of the voting electorate is going to change only slowly. As with union members and blacks, then, so with Hispanics. A successful progressive coalition-building strategy needs to keep Hispanics as part of the base, but concentrating on increasing Hispanic representation among voters isn't a plausible method for attaining a new Democratic coalition.

So, expanding the Democrats' existing base, at least anytime soon, won't pave the road to a new progressive majority. The current Democratic coalition, which most emphatically is *not* a majority, is already doing a fair job of mobilizing these voters. It could always do better, of course. But, even if it did, there are arithmetic limits to the likely effect.

So, what would pave the road? Unfashionable as it may be in left political circles these days, the answer is, simply and inescapably, the white working class, defined as whites without a four-year college degree. Of course, these non-college educated whites are "not your father's" white working class. Instead of blue-collar work, this new white working class is more likely to be doing low-level white collar and service work. And instead of working in manufacturing, the new white working class is much more likely to work in an office with a computer or at similar service-sector jobs. They are also likely to have more education; perhaps some years in college, maybe even an associate degree, and those in the workforce are much more likely to be female. *But, in economic terms, they are not so different from the white working class of previous generations*—same problems, same hopes, same dreams.

These voters are the real "swing" in American politics. Their loyalties shift the most from election to election and, in so doing, determine the winners in American politics. They are also the majority—about 55 percent of voters and of the adult population. But they don't receive much attention these days; they are invisible to journalists and commentators who define our national discourse—and, apparently, to the left, which prefers a strategy of "round up the usual suspects." This is the reverse of the way it should be; the left should be taking the lead in strenuously arguing for the centrality of reaching this "forgotten majority" and building a cross-racial, class-based coalition.

The result of not doing so? Among the four-fifths of these voters who are not in union households, the Democrats received only 41 percent support in the 1996 presidential election and just 39 percent support in the 1998 congressional election. All the turnout in the world can't overcome grim electoral data like this. It's time for the left to wake up, stop being dazzled by fool's gold, and address the central challenge of American progressive politics. It may not be a lot of fun and may even strike some as "politically incorrect," but, in the long run, it'll be a lot more rewarding. ●

Ruy Teixeira is a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. His latest book (with Joel Rogers) is *America's Forgotten Majority: Why The White Working Class Still Matters*.

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E-Commerce, the Sales Tax, and Equity

Steven Pressman

In 1998, Congress passed the Internet Tax Freedom Act. The law will keep Internet purchases virtually tax free until October 2001. It also created an Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce. The commission is made up of eight representatives from state and local governments (including three state governors and the mayor of Dallas), eight business representatives, and three senior federal government officials (U.S. Trade Representative Barshefsky, Treasury Secretary Summers, and Commerce Secretary Daley).

Congress gave the commission six policy options to consider: (1) extend the current moratorium on Internet purchases for another five years, (2) prohibit any taxes on Internet transactions, (3) develop a system for collecting taxes on e-commerce, (4) recommend a national sales tax on e-commerce to be divided among all state and local governments, (5) recommend that state and local governments simplify their sales taxes, (6) recommend that state and local governments be allowed to tax Internet transactions the way they tax other commerce.

After many hearings and much debate, the commission issued its final report in April; it recommended that the moratorium on Internet purchases be extended for five more years. But its ten-to-eight vote fell short of the two-thirds majority that Congress had requested. The close vote and the option selected (the only option that does not make a final decision on the issue) reflect the divergent views throughout the country on taxing e-commerce.

Both of the major presidential candidates have come out against taxing Internet commerce. They favor either option (1) or (2). On the other hand, state and local government officials favor options (3) through (6). They generally support an e-commerce tax because it will yield substantial revenue. Businesses, like politicians, are split on this question. And like politicians, the business split is based on self-interest rather than sound argument. E-businesses want Internet sales to remain free of taxation, while traditional businesses, weary of losing sales to tax-free e-commerce, support taxing Internet sales.

After reviewing the case for and against an Internet tax, I will argue for a more radical solution to the fiscal problem posed by e-commerce. This solution, unfortunately, was not one of the options that Congress gave the advisory commission. Congress viewed the problem too narrowly. To tax or not to tax e-commerce is not the question. The question is whether we ought to have sales taxes at all.

The Case for Taxing E-Commerce

At the end of last year, the *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer ran a segment about taxing e-commerce. One participant was William Janklow, the Republican governor of South Dakota, who bragged that his state had no income tax and that he had recently reduced property taxes. Like most states without an income tax, South Dakota gets more than half of its tax revenue from sales taxes. So Governor Janklow was rightly concerned about the impact of e-commerce on state finances. If sales tax revenues begin to disappear with growing e-commerce sales, other taxes will have to be increased, or important state spending for education, roads, and public safety will have to be cut.

Janklow is not the only governor facing such problems. The brothers Bush find themselves in a similar predicament. Florida has no income tax, and relies on state sales taxes for nearly 60 percent of its revenues. It can ill afford to lose a large chunk of this money as more and more sales are made online. Texas, too, has no

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income tax. It relies on general sales taxes for 50 percent of its tax revenues. Moreover, governor and presidential candidate George W. Bush has proposed reducing state property taxes and increasing sales taxes in Texas; so, in the future, Texas will likely be even more dependent on sales tax revenues. Having a father who broke a "read my lips; no new taxes" pledge, and then lost his bid for re-election, makes candidate Bush an unlikely supporter of a new sales tax on e-commerce.

Nationwide, state and local governments lost around one billion dollars in tax revenues during 1999 as a result of people buying goods over the Internet. With e-commerce growing ten-fold a year, tax losses to state and local governments will increase proportionately. In another year, or two, or three, the pinch will begin to be felt, and states will be forced to do something drastic to balance their budgets.

Besides the loss of revenue, there are also equity issues connected with tax-free e-commerce. First, local businesses are put at a competitive disadvantage compared to e-firms. Why should Amazon.com sell books tax-free when local bookshops have to charge sales taxes? Why should Drugstore.com be able to sell vitamins, shampoo, and cosmetics tax-free when the local pharmacy must force its customers to pay as much as an 8 percent tax?

Another equity issue is distribution of the tax burden. Sales taxes are regressive in nature; they take bigger bites out of the incomes of the poor than the wealthy, because poor families pay sales taxes on a far larger fraction of their income. Things will get much worse if we keep e-commerce tax free. The lower one's income level, the less likely one is to own a computer and to buy goods over the Internet. Tax-free e-commerce thus lets the well-to-do avoid taxes. The sales tax increasingly falls on those households too poor to have computers, Internet service, and credit cards. If states raise sales tax rates to compensate for lost revenues, the poor will bear a further burden: higher taxes on their own purchases so that better off Internet consumers can shop tax free.

There are also efficiency arguments in favor of Internet taxes. It isn't yet clear whether e-commerce is an efficient way of doing business. It may be the wave of the future, but it may also be a passing fad that cannot provide the necessary personal service of traditional retail stores. Or, what is more likely, e-commerce will turn out to be a better way to sell some goods and a worse way to sell others. My best guess is that for books, toys, and CDs, firms like Amazon.com will probably thrive. Where seeing a product, or trying it on or out is important, e-commerce will not likely succeed. But these are just educated guesses on my part. The only way to find out for sure which type of business is more efficient at selling different goods is to let them compete.

But if we let e-commerce escape sales taxes, we favor firms that sell goods over the Internet regardless of their efficiency. Traditional firms are at a competitive disadvantage and may disappear even though they are preferred by consumers. Letting e-commerce escape taxation will hurt economic efficiency, which will hurt us all. Only on a level playing field will the more efficient firms survive and thrive.

The Case Against Taxing E-Commerce

True competition requires opponents of equal size and strength. If this condition is not met, the big guys will always take advantage of the small guys. Typically, they do this by lowering prices whenever new firms try to enter the market. This tactic is designed either to scare away new firms or to ruin them.

Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890 to prevent large monopolistic firms from using their size to hinder competition. But even with the Sherman Act in place, established firms will always have an advantage over upstarts. They are profitable, and they have been profitable for a number of years, so they can afford to lower prices and keep new firms from succeeding.

In contrast, new firms have no such margin. They must rely on the confidence of new investors for funds to expand and compete. It should be remembered that Amazon.com has yet to make a profit. It is still learning how to engage in e-business efficiently—a typical problem for new, developing firms. Also, unlike the local bookstore, Amazon.com has costs associated with shipping goods to the consumer that a traditional business does not have. For

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these reasons, e-commerce firms are at a competitive disadvantage. Letting e-commerce escape taxation can thus be justified as a way to enhance competition between start-up e-firms and more established businesses. It gives the underdog a fighting chance.

But the main argument against an e-commerce sales tax has nothing to do with competition but rather with the practical problem of administering and collecting such taxes. At present, some seven thousand state and local entities impose sales or use taxes of some sort. Each individual jurisdiction decides what should be taxed and what tax rate should apply to each good. Every jurisdiction has its own peculiarities. Making for even greater complexity, jurisdictions frequently change their tax rates. This makes it virtually impossible for outside merchants to know what rate to charge.

There is no easy way for e-commerce retailers to figure out the local rate. Tax rates do not correspond to something simple like postal ZIP codes. So every time goods were bought and shipped, e-retailers would have to determine the appropriate tax. With millions of goods for sale, and thousands of tax jurisdictions, the process is daunting. That is why the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1967 and again in 1992 that remote vendors could not be required to collect sales taxes on customers who live in a state where it lacks a physical presence.

In addition, collecting the sales taxes imposed by thousands of local governments, and then sending the revenues to each of them, would impose a large administrative and financial burden on firms. Small e-businesses, struggling to make it, may not survive as a result of this burden. These firms may be efficient, but we will never find this out if the cost of collecting and remitting sales taxes drives them out of business.

A Solution to the Dilemma

Both sides to the debate make good arguments. But they have each missed the key point about e-commerce. The real issue is whether we can and should have sales taxes in a global economy.

The basic idea behind the sales tax is that people are taxed on the goods they buy at the place they buy them. When I travel to Florida, I pay sales taxes on my purchases there. When I go to South Dakota and spend my money there, I pay the sales taxes imposed by that state. But in the brave new world of e-commerce, things are not so simple. If I sit in my hotel room in Florida and access my server in New Jersey to buy a CD over the Internet from a company headquartered in South Dakota with warehouses in Texas, from where do I buy the CD? Who gets to tax me? Even if this problem can be resolved somehow, it is only the tip of the iceberg. What happens if I am in London or Paris rather than Florida when I click my mouse and buy something? And what happens if the company selling to me is headquartered in Poland and has a warehouse in Mexico?

The big problem with a sales tax is that it is too easy to avoid, and impossible to collect, in a global economy. Even if we can figure out a way to impose a national sales tax on e-commerce, and a way to divide up revenues and distribute them to thousands of state and local governments, this will not solve the problem. Firms increasingly have the ability to set up headquarters and warehouses anywhere in the world and to sell their wares from catalogs and Web sites. Short of military occupation, U.S. cities and states cannot force these foreign merchants to collect sales taxes for them. Nor can we expect American citizens voluntarily to pay sales taxes on goods shipped from abroad. Essentially, in a global economy, the sales tax becomes obsolete. Sooner or later we will have to abandon it. And sooner is better than later.

The question, then, is not how or whether to tax e-commerce, but how to lift the taxes on regular sales. State governments need to begin phasing out their sales taxes and replacing them with higher income and/or property taxes. Exemptions can easily be made for certain types of goods that cannot be purchased on the Web, but that require a physical presence at some location. In this category we may include hotels and restaurant meals, gasoline, and even cars and boats. There is also a good case to be made for taxes on goods like alcohol, tobacco, and firearms. All other taxes on sales should be abolished.

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Abolition will have numerous benefits. First, many states currently impose both income and sales taxes. Eliminating sales taxes saves these states money because they will have to monitor and collect one tax rather than two. Second, residents of states like South Dakota, Texas, and Florida, which have high sales taxes and no income tax, will actually gain from this change. So, too, will the residents of every state that currently imposes a sales tax. At present, state income and property taxes are deductible from federal income tax returns, but sales taxes are not deductible. This means that states like Florida can eliminate their sales tax and institute a state income tax (and/or increase property taxes), and their residents will come out ahead of the game. Florida residents will pay lower taxes to the federal government and will not pay any more to the state government. Similar gains will accrue to residents of states that eliminate their general sales tax and make up for the lost revenue by raising property and state income taxes.

Finally, as noted earlier, sales taxes are highly regressive. They take larger percentages of income from those who earn less. In contrast, income taxes and property taxes are progressive in their incidence; they take a bigger bite out of the wealthy. Taking all taxes into account, the U.S. tax system is just barely progressive. Given the sharp rise in incomes of the well-to-do over the past several decades, and the stagnant or falling incomes of everyone else, a more progressive tax system makes a lot of sense.

In brief, eliminating sales taxes would be more equitable than allowing e-commerce to escape taxation entirely and more efficient than trying to collect taxes from every state and locality. When it is possible to achieve both equity and efficiency at the same time, we should jump at the opportunity. ●

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Poisoned Water, Contaminated History

A Lost Story of Industrial Water Pollution

Benjamin Ross and Steven Amter

THE GOVERNOR of California charges that an industry-backed proposal to deregulate toxic waste disposal would put the polluters in charge of the pollution control setup. The director of the state health department adds that the plan would create "a backlog of water pollution over the State that will constitute a plague comparable to the air pollution in Los Angeles." These words were spoken not in the 1980s or 1990s, but on June 7, 1949, and the governor was Earl Warren, later chief justice of the United States. A few weeks afterward, the Dickey Act, a diluted version of the deregulation plan that Warren had denounced, became law. And fifty years later, industrial waste dumping has indeed left a plague of water pollution beneath the ground. While billions of dollars are spent on cleanup, the Dickey Act is largely forgotten, and when remembered it is described as a great step forward in environmental control.

As history is now told, the problem of soil and ground water polluted by toxic industrial wastes burst suddenly into the national consciousness in 1978 with the discovery of Love Canal. Soon afterward, the passage of the Superfund law set in motion a massive cleanup. Twenty years later, the work of undoing the poisoning of lands and waters goes on at a cost of billions of dollars per year.

The poisoning was many years in the making. Coal tar lingers still beneath gasworks closed when natural gas arrived in the twenties. Sites of long-forgotten smelters are still surrounded by lead dust. And the manufacture of synthetic organic chemicals, from its first flowering in the 1910s right up to the late 1970s, put a rich variety of hazardous chemicals into the ground. How did it come about that the dumping went on largely unchecked for decades? A simple answer to this troubling question is often stated and widely believed: *No one knew.* It simply wasn't understood, the story goes, that chemicals would move downward to contaminate underground aquifers and spread outward with the flowing water. Only in the late seventies were these insidious properties of toxic wastes suddenly "discovered."

Even among environmentalists and scientists, this account enjoys wide acceptance. A 1999 environmental report card for Southern California, for instance, gives the region an "F" for its past efforts to protect ground water. Yet the grade is qualified by the statement that "in most cases, we really did not know what we were doing." When events are seen in this light, everyone did what seemed right at the time and no one is really to blame. This conventional wisdom is convenient for nearly all concerned. Industry can escape criticism, and sometimes liability, for the effects of its dumping. Corporate innocence also makes life easier for government regulators, because pollution is usually investigated and cleaned up by the company that made the mess. The control system breaks down unless, most of the time at least, the good faith of the people doing the work can be presumed.

DID TOXIC WASTE pollution really result from innocent mistakes? Industry-sponsored studies affirm this conclusion, but a few independent-minded investigators have delved into the records and found otherwise. Peter Skinner and Craig Colten pioneered this research in *The Road to Love Canal*, and Anthony Travis's studies of Swiss dye manufacturing have extended our knowledge back into

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the nineteenth century. Yet the debate over the Dickey Act remains unknown to history.

The 1949 Debate

By the 1940s, ground-water pollution had gained more attention in southern California than almost anywhere else in the country. In a desert where rivers percolate into the earth rather than flowing to the sea, aquifers are easily endangered by discharge of industrial waste. Shortage of water, population growth, and rapid industrial development combined to make any threat to water resources a public concern.

As early as the 1920s, control of waste water from oil wells and refineries was a major political issue in the area, and sewage treatment works grew rapidly in number. By 1942, city water wells in Los Angeles were known to be polluted by chromium from aircraft manufacturing. Then in 1945, the spectacular "Montebello incident" attracted wide public attention. Wastes from a newly opened pesticide plant passed unaltered through sewage treatment. Discharged into a river, the effluent joined a flow that percolated into the ground. Within two weeks, public wells more than four miles downstream were polluted with foul-smelling toxic wastes that were detectable at concentrations as low as a few parts per billion.

In response to these and other well-publicized cases, the state health department began to implement old but little-used pollution control statutes. Laws passed between 1907 and 1917 required permits for disposal of wastes of any kind wherever the water percolated into underground drinking-water supplies. Permit-holders were required to install treatment plants designed and managed to the satisfaction of the state, and the penalties for illegal dumping ran up to one year in prison for each day the disposal continued.

In 1946, the health department issued new regulations aimed at enforcing these long-ignored laws. The state's industries quickly mobilized against the threat of an end to cheap waste disposal. Their strategy was to control the public debate over this complicated subject. As a first step, the legislature was convinced to appoint an investigative committee under the chairmanship of a pro-business Republican member of the Assembly, Randal Dickey. With weaknesses in the existing statute—most notably the absence of any sanction short of criminal punishment—universally acknowledged, there was little disagreement that new legislation of some kind was needed.

A new organization, the California Association of Producing Industries (CAPI), was set up to represent business interests in the water pollution debate. Working through the Dickey Commission, the CAPI sought to shift the focus of attention away from industrial wastes and toward inadequacies in the treatment of household sewage. Even in the 1940s, this tactic was not new. As early as 1924 the American Petroleum Institute had seized control of a federal investigation of seacoast oil pollution and successfully deflected blame away from refineries, leading to passage of narrow legislation that regulated discharge of bilge oil from ocean-going ships.

In the spring of 1949, after twenty-four days of public hearings, the Dickey Commission issued its findings. A first encounter with the Dickey report is startling for any reader convinced by conventional accounts of environmental history. The report shows a widespread understanding that many industrial wastes are not broken down in the soil as sewage is, and that these materials are prone to migrate downward and pollute water supplies. Scientists, public health officials, and the public were already intensely concerned about toxic chemicals getting into ground water. But the commission turned away from these scientific findings. It instead emphasized two points that justified a permissive approach to industrial waste: (1)the economic importance of industry to California and (2) that direct threats to public health from water pollution almost always came from sewage rather than industrial waste.

On this basis, a thorough deregulation of waste discharges was proposed. Dickey introduced a series of bills whose fundamental premise was that waste disposal is a legitimate and beneficial use of water resources, to be encouraged in the interest of economic development. Dumping would be restricted only after it was shown to interfere with existing uses of the water, such as drinking, irrigation, or recreation.

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Dickey called for a repeal of the system of licensing by the health department, whose role was to be limited to emergency action in cases where people were proven to be sickened by polluted water. Dischargers of waste were required only to file reports describing their discharges with newly created Regional Water Pollution Control Boards. The boards, representing local economic interests and local governments, were authorized merely to specify what conditions had to be maintained in the water bodies that received these discharges; they could not set limits on what was in the waste or require any specific kind of treatment.

Opposition to Dickey's proposals was led by the California League of Cities, upset by provisions overturning local government controls on industrial waste, and by state and county health departments. They were joined by an alliance that included the Farm Bureau, water utilities, irrigation districts, and county governments. A competing bill, retaining licensing of waste discharges by the state health department while creating new enforcement mechanisms, was drafted by Governor Warren's administration and introduced by State Senator Nelson Dilworth.

After the Dickey bills were pushed through the state assembly with little discussion, matters came to a head on June 7. As Governor Warren denounced Dickey's proposals at a press conference, health department director Wilton Halverson testified before a committee hearing that attracted such crowds it had to be moved to the Senate chamber. Halverson urged the Senate to retain state licensing powers, issuing a prescient warning that prevention was the key to controlling water pollution. Dickey struck back with an attack on his critics' motives, accusing local governments of causing 85 percent of the problem by inadequately treating sewage. The cities, he claimed, favored the Dilworth bill's permit system only because it would grant them a license to continue polluting. This was a transparent falsehood: the League of Cities had recently won state funding of sewage treatment over opposition that included Warren himself.

Charges and countercharges flew for another week, until a compromise was brokered by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The Dickey proposals had earlier been changed to allow local governments to license waste discharges if they chose, a power already exercised to good effect in Los Angeles and Orange counties. The new Regional Water Boards were now authorized to impose requirements on the contents of waste water before it was released and became diluted in the environment. But enforcement of these requirements was made difficult; the board had the burden of proving in court that existing uses of the water would be curtailed as a direct result of a violation. The amended bills passed quickly and were signed by Governor Warren a month later.

The next major California water pollution law, the Porter-Cologne Act of 1969, passed an implicit judgment on the Dickey Act by repealing its most controversial provisions. Waste could be discharged only after advance notification of the Water Board and issuance of requirements, in effect returning the state to a permit system. The concept of waste disposal as a beneficial use of water was explicitly rejected. Board orders could be enforced without proof that an existing use of water would be affected. That the Porter-Cologne Act, which remains to this day the foundation of water pollution control in California, could be passed by unanimous vote of the legislature with the support of Governor Ronald Reagan is the true measure of the backward step taken twenty years earlier.

Invented Memory

As public concern grew through the 1960s and 1970s, environmental protection increasingly became a national issue. With the passage of hazardous-waste laws in 1976 and the creation of the Superfund in 1980, protection of ground water became a federal responsibility for the first time. By the late 1980s, ground-water cleanup had grown into a multibillion-dollar enterprise.

At this point, circumstances favored the spread of a misleading story of how the problem had developed. Industry had an enormous financial interest in the question. If pollution had been an intentional act, cleanup costs would not be covered by insurance, and pol-

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luters would be liable to civil suits by those they injured. But to scientists and environmentalists, the history was an unimportant preliminary to be passed over quickly before reaching the real question of how to clean things up.

With strong incentives to spread accounts favorable to industry, and little inclination to check them, a conventional wisdom arose from sparse and flimsy historical studies. Research into the origins of the problem was frequently funded by industry, often in direct support of litigation. The idea that *no one knew* was supported by selective use of evidence, by plain misrepresentation, and by the circular argument that industry and government wouldn't have allowed such things to happen if they had understood what they were doing. Academic historians have been drawn by a focus on household garbage rather than industrial waste, and on federal rather than state regulation, to overlook the Dickey Act and much else that was known early on about ground-water pollution. Other research (including that which led to this article) has grown out of lawsuits, giving an argumentative tone to the entire field.

A 1994 report from the National Academy of Sciences entitled *Alternatives for Ground Water Cleanup* is one of many examples that show how historical error can persist in these circumstances. In a brief historical introduction, this book says flatly,

> Ground water [unlike streams] was long believed to be naturally protected by the layers between the earth's surface and the water table, which people believed would filter out contaminants. The problem of ground water contamination did not receive widespread public recognition until the 1970s.

The only references cited in support of this account are four papers from the proceedings of a 1961 conference. But these papers—key documents in the history of ground-water contamination—directly contradict what the Academy report says.

For instance, the following account is attributed to one of the papers:

> Recognizing the increasing potential for chemical contamination of ground water, the American Water Works Association created a task force of scientists . . . to study the problem in the early 1950s. The task group's first report, issued in 1952, documented that very few states were aware of the potential for ground water contamination.

What this paper, written by Francis Middleton and Graham Walton of the U.S. Public Health Service, actually says about the 1952 report is that few states had detected ground-water contamination, not that few were aware of the possibility. Moreover, the Academy report fails to note that Middleton and Walton also describe the 1957 and 1960 reports of the same task force, in which no fewer than thirty-nine states describe ground-water contamination incidents.

A reading of the original document leaves no doubt that the historical record has become seriously distorted. The fact that many states did not report contamination is ascribed to "sparse population, lack of industry, heavy soil types, and absence of productive aquifers." In other words, state officials who had not observed ground-water contamination knew of the danger and thought it had been avoided only because their state lacked industry, lacked usable ground water, and so on.

So blatant a mistake could hardly have escaped detection by the careful scientists who wrote the Academy report if history had been their interest. It would have been easy to check the original 1952 source, a five-page article in a widely circulated technical journal. But because the committee understandably focused on how to clean things up, it missed an opportunity to correct the historical record.

Lessons of Lost History

After the full extent of ground-water pollution became evident in the 1980s, industry had strong financial incentives to express surprise. And claims that the vulnerability of ground water to contamination had not been understood were easy for disinterested observers to accept. Government agencies do not question the good intentions of the lawmakers who created them. Environmental publicists rush to trumpet the latest horror stories, and journalists who cover them are disinclined to delve into the past. Scientists, who rarely look up references more than a few years old, are prone

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to historical amnesia. And since the history is usually a mere prologue to more important matters, it was easy to repeat a conventional story without pausing to consider whether it was true.

How widely, then, was the threat to ground water understood? The historical debate has foundered on the difficulty of judging whether reports in scientific journals diffused beyond circles of specialists. By providing a snapshot of what well-informed policy makers knew in 1949, the Dickey Report and the debates that accompanied it show that information had spread far beyond the scientists. To be sure, concern about ground water was more acute in California than in most other places. But the Dickey Report drew on knowledge that was not local; the claim that *no one knew* that industrial wastes could pollute ground water is simply untenable.

Although correction is needed, the history of industrial waste should not be rewritten by simply projecting the present into the past. The California struggle against deregulation of waste disposal was led by progressives with a background in municipal reform; what today would be called environmental groups played little role. And political conservatives could be found on both sides; Congressmember Richard Nixon, then preparing his run for the U.S. Senate, had links to water interests that opposed the Dickey Bill as well as to industries that supported it.

Different as past environmental battles may have been from today's, there is much to learn from them. Legislative debates have real consequences. Today's ground-water pollution doesn't stem from ignorance or from the inevitable workings of technology; it is the outcome of a political conflict won by industry. And when the effects of industry's success in escaping stringent regulation became apparent, a sugar-coated version of environmental history emerged to help the polluters escape the financial consequences of their actions. With the environmental behavior of corporations now a staple of political argument, it is a story worth recalling. ●

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Is Globalization Americanization?

Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens in Conversation

WILL HUTTON and Anthony Giddens are playing leading roles in the British debate on globalization and the "third way." This fall, their jointly edited book Global Capitalism *will be published in the United States by the New Press. It begins with a vigorous dialogue between the editors, and we present excerpts from it here. We join them as they dispute the origins and implications of the Asian economic crisis of 1997–1998. Will Hutton is the former editor of the* London Observer *and the author of* The State We're In. *Anthony Giddens is director of the London School of Economics and Political Science and the author, most recently, of* The Third Way and its Critics.*—EDS.*

WILL HUTTON: I think you can trace the Asia crisis. . .back to the late 1980s and early 1990s when economic policies in Asia were dictated by the need to meet the agenda of Western capitalism, and American capitalism in particular. The Americans said, if you want Wall Street money then you must peg your currencies to the dollar and open up your financial systems to our banks and financial institutions, and that was all done under this technocratic umbrella term—capital market liberalization. I argue that the seeds of the financial crisis were sown not so much by crony capitalism but by the impact of this ill-judged capital market liberalization interacting with the speculative international financial markets who had these pegged exchange rates to speculate against.

The United States wanted price stability and it wanted less exchange-rate risk for its overseas investments, and the dollar pegs seemed a good way of achieving both. But there could not have been a run on these currencies unless they had been pegged to the dollar; and the dollar peg was established in part to meet inflation targets, and in part to ensure that exchange-rate risk was borne by the host country so that the inward investors—mainly the Americans but also Western Europeans—wouldn't have to insure themselves so heavily against so much risk. So it was more or less inevitable that the whole policy nexus would become unsustainable as soon as the financial deregulation caused asset price booms—bubble economies really—property booms and all the rest of it. Japan's economic collapse and China entering the world trade system did not help the declining growth in exports that were already uncompetitive; balance of payments deficits grew explosively.

So what really took place in the 1990s is a great power play: Asian capitalism versus American capitalism. U.S. capitalism wins, with the Asia crisis of 1997–1998 actually being the flashpoint, and the financial markets working in a way that furthers U.S. interests. That's not the conventional view, and I think it puts an important question mark over globalization. There is a dimension of globalization that is about opening up the world to American interests in particular and Western capitalism in general. Unlike you I regard Francis Fukuyama and *The End of History* as missing the point: underneath the glitz there remains the exercise of raw power.

ANTHONY GIDDENS: You've got too much of a conspiracy theory there. The United States isn't able to rig things quite as easily or completely as you say. I didn't see much sign that American governments of any complexion have wanted to overturn Asian capitalism, although at one point many thought it held the keys to the future—as you continue to think of Germany now.

Your position is still too close to old left-

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ism. It's too easy to blame the ills of the world economy on U.S. power. It's no good treating world financial markets as though they were part of some gigantic American scheme to control the world economy. Obviously the United States is by far the dominant economic power in the world and most of the big corporations are U.S.-based. Yet the global marketplace isn't just an extension of American power. The United States doesn't control financial markets any more than any other country or agency does.

WH: Not everything the old left believed is axiomatically wrong. I don't think Germany holds the key to the future; I think its system is more robust than you think, that's all. As for the United States, your use of the verb "rig" overstates what I am arguing. As a matter of fact President Clinton did set up in 1993 the Economic Security Council, one of whose aims was expressly to open up ten countries to U.S. trade and finance—and the Asian tigers were the principal target. It wasn't that the United States wanted to "overturn" Asian capitalism; it wanted to open it up to U.S. interests, much as it has been trying to do in Japan for the past thirty years. And it has been comparatively successful.

And don't underestimate U.S. power now. I thought you were right earlier on to cite the collapse of the Soviet Union as being one of the chief events to change the world; but what it has also done is to leave the United States unchallenged as the world's hegemonic power. The dollar is the world currency. It allows the United States to finance colossal trade deficits and extraordinary levels of domestic consumption. Whatever the issues, whether intellectual property rights or capital market liberalization, they have been shaped by U.S. power trying to increase its interests. This has been evident in all kinds of arenas, from not signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to unilaterally firing off cruise missiles at terrorist targets—and of course in the Sudan they proved not to be terrorist at all.

Equally, the financial markets must not be seen just as sources of economic instability, although they are that. They are also transmission mechanisms of very particular economic ideas—like the belief in ultra-free markets—and of very particular economic interests, which are overwhelmingly if not exclusively American.

AG: I don't see that, because you haven't specified any alternatives. Economic globalization today is the medium of economic development, whatever its downsides might be, and I agree they are many. But no country that opts out of the new world economy has any chance of sustaining effective economic prosperity. The countries that have opted out most completely, such as North Korea or Burma [Myanmar], are among the poorest in the world. The Asian economies might have experienced setbacks, but they are nonetheless the most remarkable examples we have of countries that have achieved a breakthrough in economic development. I don't think you could say the Asian crisis was in the American interest. Moreover, the crisis period passed because most of the Asian countries reacted in a dynamic way.

WH: I don't for a minute think the Americans designed the crisis; but as a matter of fact they did benefit hugely. The result of the emergency IMF [International Monetary Fund] programs was to cement the commitment to liberalization, opening up markets to U.S. companies and forcing sales of assets to U.S. investors—as especially in Korea. And the Federal Reserve Board cut interest rates aggressively. I'm not sure how dynamic the Asian response was in the sense of being driven from the top; it's very hard to avoid a sharp increase in your exports if your currency has halved, and I'm sure that all of them would have settled for no crisis in the first place!

You must not be naive about the exercise of power; or the determined way the U.S. Treasury and the IMF worked together to help U.S. interests. And the reason I have not specified alternatives is that our conversation has not got that far yet; I think we share quite a lot of common ground over the need for more supranational and European-level government and regulation. . .

AG: But I don't see why it's only the United States that gains. There isn't a zero-sum game

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involved. When NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] was set up, many thought that the U.S. economy would simply swamp the Mexican one. But, so far at least, the Mexican economy seems to be doing pretty well out of the deal. It doesn't make much sense to treat financial markets as the advance guard of American interests. After all, the financial markets are made up of many investors, looking for investment opportunities and assessing these against risk. They are also plainly subject to irrational fluctuations and panics. But there seems to me much more general will to regulate financial markets than there used to be. Neo-liberalism is pretty much dead.

WH: I don't recall any significant body of opinion saying that Mexico would be swamped by the United States when NAFTA was set up. The argument rather was that too many U.S. companies would migrate to Mexico and take low-wage jobs with them, and that would be a problem in some of the older manufacturing areas in the United States—as it has been. As for the financial markets and Mexico, the country nearly went bust in 1981 and again in 1995, costing it years of lost growth. Dollarization has come to Mexico with a vengeance, and it has become a regional economy of the United States without any accompanying rights.

As for the death of neo-liberalism, I'd like to believe that, but I'm not sure it's true. At the time of the crisis I thought neo-liberalism might be dead. There they were, the free market, University of Chicago, Nobel Prize-winning economists, who had designed complex, computer-based, risk-assessment models, but whose basic economic assumption was that markets tend to clear and that prices tend to converge around some normal distribution. They were wrong, and hadn't factored the scale of price swings we saw during the Asia crisis into their models. I thought that would shock people into moving away from neo-liberalism but it has not. It may be true that in the intellectual economic and social science circles with which you and I are familiar, neo-liberalism is pretty much stone dead. But it lives on in politics. For example, the document that Schroeder and Blair presented in June 1999 as their model of updated social democracy was an astonishing statement of neo-liberal principles [Ed. Note: see "The Third Way/*Die Neue Mitte*," by Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder, annotation by Joanne Barkan, *Dissent*, Spring 2000]. It continues to have a naive trust in markets. It explicitly argues that the job of politicians is not to change, reform, or manage these markets; rather, it is to attempt to improve the empowerment of our citizens to do better in these markets. Thus we can marry social justice and economic efficiency.

Both Schroeder and Blair believe the neo-liberal doctrine that markets are essentially benevolent, a wealth-creating process that generates efficiencies. The argument is settled. You may think that it is dead, but it lives on in the minds of some of our leading politicians.

AG: I suppose this depends upon how one understands "neo-liberalism." The basic idea of neo-liberalism, as I would understand it, is that markets are in almost all respects superior to government. Markets not only provide for a rational allocation of products and labor power, they foreclose the need for any kind of program of social justice. You don't need, and can't have, policies of social justice when—if the market is given full and free play—everything is bought and sold at its true value. The idea of minimal government flows directly from this. Government is needed only to provide a legal framework for contracts and for defense, law, and order. As developed in Thatcherism and Reaganism, neo-liberalism also involved strongly conservative influences. Traditional symbols, the traditional family, and the traditional nation were to be preserved.

Taken as this package, I don't think many people are neo-liberals any more. I don't just mean intellectuals. The voters aren't either. Most don't want to be told that "you are on your own" in the face of the insecurities of the global marketplace. Even some of the biggest fans of a neo-liberal perspective have now abandoned it. The major world organizations, for example, like the World Bank, are mostly talking of the need for better and more transparent government. They are also emphasising much more strongly than before the crucial importance of tackling world inequalities. I would certainly see this as a general shift in

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political consciousness. It goes along with the rise of third-way politics. No one much thinks that one can go back to top-down, bureaucratic government. If neo-liberalism is also in decline, we have to look for something different—a third way.

Reforming the Global Economy

AG: Even though one of its themes was globalization, I was astounded by the global response to my book *The Third Way*. Third-way politics is being discussed in most countries, and all sorts of politicians—some of doubtful provenance—are laying claim to being "third-way politicians." The idea of the third way has also sparked a barrage of critical responses from the more traditional left. To some extent our discussion is following the same divide—between the more traditional leftist views and the modernizing left.

The values of the left—solidarity, social justice, protection of the vulnerable, and the belief that active government is needed to achieve these—are still crucially important in the contemporary world. But the old strategies and institutions, including existing structures of the welfare state, are no longer able to deliver upon them. Most of our institutions need modernization, where this means reforming them in response to the changes we've been analyzing.

Third-way politics for me is about the rebirth of social democracy. It is definitively a left-of-center project, but one that is unafraid to shed old left dogmas and prejudices. It is quite mistaken to identify third-way politics, as you did earlier, with letting markets rip. We must take globalization seriously, which means responding above the level of the nation as well as domestically. It is both possible and necessary to achieve more effective global governance, greater world equality, and better ecological regulation.

WH: I think you're being a bit naughty here. You know very well that I am not "old left," but if the tag sticks that will delegitimate some of my arguments and legitimate yours. You have made some sweeping judgments about the reach of the knowledge economy, the systemic crisis of contemporary Germany, and the improbability of the Americans directing globalization that I have disputed and that I think are not supported by facts. And there have been a number of occasions—such as your argument that poverty is no longer a condition and that any condemnation of inequality should be leavened by recognition that in America at least there is an inclusive attitude toward minorities—where I have felt that your argument is full of insight, but incomplete. And I feel very strongly that you can't have it both ways; the injustices you want to correct are not independent of the capitalism you admire—they result directly from its operation. Sometimes you have found yourself wanting both more regulation and more capitalism.

But to say this does not mean that I am "old left" or want "old left" responses. I have argued that capitalism is creative as well as destructive; globalization presents new risks as well as new opportunities; capitalism's vitality can be turned to collective advantage; the effective response can only be global. When you get to specific points and examples, you find yourself in agreement with positions that you tend to dismiss as traditional in general—but which remain true.

AG: There are two general questions that we need to answer. Is globalization, in sum, the same as Americanization? More broadly put, is globalization a set of processes dominated by Western countries to their own advantage? I would answer a qualified "no" to each of these questions.

Globalization. . .refers to a complex of changes rather than a single one. No single country, or group of countries, controls any one of them. Economic globalization, of course, has been and is shaped by U.S. foreign and domestic policy. The health of the global economy at any one time is strongly influenced by the strength or otherwise of the U.S. economy. During the cold-war period successive U.S. governments were propagating a distinct "way of life" around the world in a self-conscious struggle with communism. American economic power was backed by a global network of military alliances, by numerous forms of interventionism, and by the propagating of "proxy wars" in various places. Old habits die hard, but the United States doesn't have these strategic in-

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terests any more. The battle within the United States these days is between those who favor free trade and a global role for the country and those (a mixture of old left and Republican right) who favor protectionism and disengagement.

WH: I would redefine that battle—you equate the old Democrat left and the Republican right in true third-way style, but they are not equivalent. It is a battle between Americans who want to sustain a liberal international order in all its guises, for which there is a substantial majority on the left notwithstanding some protectionist tendencies, and others who want to assert U.S. sovereignty, self-interest, and long-standing isolationist proclivities—a set of propositions to which the Republican Party, with some honorable exceptions, is now passionately committed. You have just got the numbers wrong. Fifty-two Republican senators voted against the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in October 1999—and only four for it. Every Democratic senator voted for it. It's the same story on land-mines, the International Criminal Court, contributions to the UN, reform of the IMF, and committing to international agreements on the environment. American conservatives, with their allies in the Fortune 500 and on Wall Street, are against all these things. The liberals are broadly for them.

My point throughout this conversation is that liberal America has its back against the wall; that the conservatives are in the ascendant; and that they have been ruthless in pursuit of their interests, compromising the Clinton presidency and shaping globalization in U.S. interests.

AG: The United States and the West are easily the dominant powers in "globalization from above"—financial markets, trade, and technological innovation. But there are also fundamental processes of "globalization from below," which to some extent counterbalance the other set of forces. One of the biggest changes over the past thirty or so years has been a vast growth of nongovernmental organizations [NGOs] , interest groups, and pressure groups operating on a worldwide level. There used to be only a few hundred of these; now there are more than ten thousand. They act as something of a check upon the activities both of governments and business corporations. Save in a few closed societies, it is almost impossible nowadays to carry on dubious activities in any one corner of the world without their becoming widely known. Consumers can also play a part in these movements and pressures. In the Brent Spar episode, it wasn't only the activities of Greenpeace that forced Shell to change its position and policies, but consumer power too. People in a number of key countries stopped buying Shell products.

WH: Good point, and I broadly accept it. . . Heineken, Unilever, and Monsanto are having to adjust their corporate strategies to consumer power. The difficulty is that while consumers clearly have the power to buy or not to buy, it is pretty crude—and only arises when there is a well-publicized flashpoint. Consumers do not have a systematic voice through the democratic process or in the ways companies take decisions, although as we have discussed, we would both like to see a much more robust web of national and international regulation to enforce responsible corporate behavior.

Consumer power is also easily manipulable, and sometimes the manipulators are unaccountable and too free and easy with facts. Greenpeace has admitted that in the Brent Spar case its facts were wrong and it misled public opinion and a gullible media; and there is now a consensus that Shell's original plan for the rig was broadly reasonable. And perhaps most important of all, I am not sure that sufficient consumers are internationalist in their thinking and represent the basis for the global civil society you seek; look how in the recent beef war between Britain and France consumers very quickly became jingoistic. The NGOs are certainly formidable and sometimes effective, but again I am not sure you can generalize from them to draw the optimistic conclusions that you do.

AG: The structure of power in the main international organizations is plainly imbalanced in favor of the developed societies. Countries like India or Brazil are not represented on the UN Security Council. The other organizations, G7

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of course, plus the World Bank and the IMF are also more or less wholly dominated by the affluent countries. The less developed states should be brought much more fully into the picture as they are to some degree in the new G10. India's decision to test nuclear weapons was prompted largely by its feeling of being overlooked in the world community. The Indians looked to the example of China, which has nuclear weapons, and which gets courted much more by the Western nations than India does.

WH: . . . I wonder, why do you think reform has been so difficult? If we are to win support for the changes we both want to see, I think there has to be recognition that until the relationship between the United States and China can be rebased, the prospect of any substantive reform is minimal. The Chinese remain a communist power run by a military oligarchy, and they give the United States the pretext to stand by its unilateralist position. Idealistic internationalism has to be backed by a cool appreciation of where power lies and the balance of national interests, and I think this is where your arguments are sometimes weak.

AG: One of the most difficult issues, of course, at least on the face of things, is the environmental one. The poorer countries don't think it is just that they should accept limitations on their own economic development because of environmental problems caused primarily by industrial developments in the West. However, I believe that with a certain amount of goodwill, and of rational understanding from both sides, these issues could be resolved. Most environmental pollution may have been caused by Western industrial development, but it now affects everyone. The less developed countries are threatened more by global warming than are the developed ones, which are nearly all in the more temperate zones. All countries have a material interest in collaborating to help resolve or limit these problems. In addition, new technologies offer the chance of skipping some of the phases of industrial development that an emerging country used to have to go through. Manufacture can in principle be both much more efficient and cleaner when dominated by information technology. New forms of waste management are also very promising. According to new ecological thinking, "waste" should become a redundant concept. Everything that goes into production can be recycled, quite often adding to profitability rather than detracting from it.

WH: Personally I think the environmental arguments will only be advanced in the face of real perceived problems—not the possibility that problems might emerge at some unspecified time in the future. I think the emerging water shortage in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia may bring a collaborative response, and we can see how the argument is developing over the food chain—with Monsanto now agreeing that it will not produce the so-called "terminator gene." I also think transport, both nationally and internationally, is a major environmental challenge.

But the more long-run problems, like global warming, seem to me very difficult to get agreement on, and rightly; after all, the case is not proven yet as a watertight proposition although the facts are pretty suggestive. If we had believed the Club of Rome prognostications thirty years ago, we would not have allowed the degree of economic growth of which you boasted earlier on. One of the green movement's favorite arguments is that environmentalism is win/win: profitable and environmentally friendly. I am much more cautious over the proposition. If recycling waste was so profitable, capitalism would have moved in; that it hasn't suggests that there is a lot of wishful thinking on the matter. I am very sympathetic to green arguments, but I am not sure that building international coalitions in this territory is ever going to be that easy. ●

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Kibbutzim

Will They Survive the New Israel?

Jo-Ann Mort and Gary Brenner

On January 14, 1991, when the first Iraqi scuds hit Israel, one of the central commitments of the kibbutz—that children are best educated among their peers in the communal children's house—shattered within a few hours. Parents swooped up their children and took them "home," to be by their side in a secured room. On kibbutz after kibbutz, the grand experiment of collective child rearing, which had been gradually disappearing over the last several decades, collapsed completely as children camped out on their parents' floors, sofas, cots, and bunk-beds, in tiny two-room houses built for couples living alone. Long-running ideological debates about whether or not to abolish communal child rearing were decided by Saddam's scud attack. After the war, there was no turning back. Kibbutz children and parents would not be separated for the sake of a lost ideal.

Suddenly, the kibbutz economy, already in deep trouble because of the agricultural and inflationary crises of the 1980s, had a new financial burden. Houses would need to be enlarged, families accommodated. Perhaps it's not strange that after all the debates about the right way to raise children, the deciding push came from outside the community. The crisis of the kibbutz today derives from the inescapable interaction of its communal philosophy with the outside world—most pointedly, with the materialism of its neighbors (most of the world, after all). Today, kibbutzim are privatizing on a large scale, giving up on many of their utopian ideals. Although this article tells the story of one kibbutz, it is not an atypical tale. The grand experiment has failed—or it is entering a new era.

The demographics of the kibbutzim over the last fifteen years demonstrate the depth of the problem. In 1983, there were 267 kibbutzim in Israel with a total population of 115,000. This increased to 125,000 in 1990 and dropped back to 114,000 by 1996. From 1994 to 1998, there was a net decrease of approximately 2.5 percent. The population was declining and might soon decline much faster: the median age for kibbutz members in 1998 was fifty-three years, up from fifty-one in 1994. (These figures exclude the sixteen religious kibbutzim of the Ha'Dati movement.) Young people were voting with their feet against kibbutz ideals.

In spite of this grim reality, we believe that the kibbutz can be remodeled for a new era. Building on the accomplishments of the founding generations, we think it is possible to equip the kibbutzim with the economic and social tools to save the existing communities—to mark out a "third way" between collectivism and the market, combining justice with individual freedom and a higher standard of living.

Hatzor

This is the story of Kibbutz Hatzor's struggle to attain that goal. The kibbutz was founded in 1936 as the third settlement of the left-wing Kibbutz Artzi Federation (KAF). In 1946, these Socialist-Zionists were allocated land on what would have been a border post had the 1947 UN partition plan been realized, located twenty-seven miles south of Tel Aviv and four miles east of the then-nonexistent port of Ashdod. Fifty-three years later, Hatzor's expansive fields are surrounded by suburban communities established during the last decade. And Ashdod, founded in 1956, with most inhabitants coming from Morocco, is a thriving city, its population dramatically increased by the recent arrival of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

In 1948, Israel could boast of four kibbutz movements, with ideological differences on

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subjects ranging from the socialist nature of the Soviet state to the "correct" size of the community. By 1999, the four had become two, and then the left-leaning KAF merged with the United Kibbutz Movement to form a single group called—appropriately enough in this post-ideological age—simply "The Kibbutz Movement." The religious kibbutzim have remained outside.

Hatzor's founding members came from pre-state Israel, North America, and Bulgaria. In the 1950s, members of the Swiss and French Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement joined, followed by young people from North Africa, Iran, and Iraq. In the 1960s and 1970s, North American and West European volunteers came to study Hebrew on the kibbutz and some, including one of the authors, stayed. Hatzor's population peaked in 1984, with 360 members. One can become a member any time after serving in the army, so people under twenty (also spouses who choose not to be members) are not included in these numbers. Today, the membership has dropped to three hundred, with a total population of nearly six hundred. Hatzor's founders are in their eighties. Out of the 300 members, roughly one third, 114, are over the age of 65. The next largest age group is between forty and fifty-five. Only ten members are under forty. In the last five years, about thirty young adults under twenty-eight years old have returned to the kibbutz to live, but have not (yet) joined. They, like thousands of twenty-something Israelis, are in between travels to India, Australia, South America, and New York. Whether they become members of Hatzor depends on what Hatzor can offer them.

The world has evolved in ways the early pioneers could never have imagined. In communities that once debated whether a single phone in the communal dining room was sufficient for a settlement of hundreds, kibbutz members walk around with cell phones, sometimes one per family member. Private radios and electric tea pots were once a sign of ideological deviation, yet today members choose among a dozen television stations made available through the large satellite dish that sits on the ground near the swimming pool; they work, play, and communicate on personal computers.

Some of this privatizing of social life happened without fanfare, but the consequences are serious, undermining the notion of a "pure" communal lifestyle and demonstrating that the kibbutz is not immune to the modern world. In recent years, the individual purchase of cars challenged the notion of common ownership, but almost no one tried to stop the purchases, so the cars proliferated. Similarly, the idea that one's house was owned by the kibbutz is giving way; now homes are listed in the individual members' name. Today, some kibbutzim, Hatzor among them, are struggling with issues like property taxes, inheritance, and the community's right of first refusal. Every question has ideological resonance: should lots be offered to children of the kibbutz who prefer not to join but want to live close to parents and siblings?

THE EVOLUTION of Hatzor's communal dining room, a fundamental kibbutz institution, illustrates today's changes. Keeping open a huge communal kitchen and dining room barely used for week-night dinners is a drain on the kibbutz economy. However, in Hatzor there is no call to close it, as has happened on many other kibbutzim. Shabbat—the Friday night dinner—is the one time the hall is full, with extended families coming together for the meal. From April to October there is an outdoor cafe that sustains the old communal spirit, albeit for only a few hours a day. Hatzor still celebrates weddings and bar/bat mitzvahs communally, which many kibbutzim no longer do. Today, though, Hatzor's members keep track of their food allowance through a computerized system of cash registers. This system has greatly reduced food waste; four-fifths of the original KAF kibbutzim now require payment for meals in the dining hall.

Meanwhile, the food has improved, due largely to the hiring of a master chef. Twenty-eight year-old Noa—born on Hatzor—was weighing whether to become a Hatzor member. During her wanderings off kibbutz, she trained as a master chef. She married someone from outside who holds an important position in a Hatzor-owned factory. Hired by the kibbutz to put her talents to use, she improved the quality of food dramatically. People now can

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enjoy a meal and not just fulfill a social commitment. But Israeli chefs are well paid, and although Noa wasn't asking for a fair-market rate, she wanted to earn a salary close to what she would get outside, a demand once unheard of on the kibbutz. After several months of committee meetings, she now receives a respectable salary as a hired chef living on the kibbutz. She and her husband, in effect, rent their apartment. In the past, such arrangements could only be "temporary." Whether Noa and her husband will actually become members of Hatzor is still uncertain.

Where scarcity and ideology once combined to enforce a lack of interest in personal wealth, today's kibbutzniks (not only the younger generation) have expectations similar to those of their upper-middle-class peers in the United States, Western Europe, and the rest of Israel. They want to travel, they want nice things (to the point of conspicuous consumption), and they are beginning to understand that to achieve these "needs" they will have to increase their income significantly. Social factors led to a privatizing of everyday life, and this has economic consequences.

The Economy

Until the mid-1970s, Hatzor was an economically stable kibbutz, with a relatively profitable industry and productive agricultural branches. But in the 1980s, an economic crisis hit the entire kibbutz movement, brought about by high inflation after the war in Lebanon, the Likud government's policy of squeezing the kibbutzim, and the worldwide collapse of the cotton market. The kibbutzim had to industrialize. But new industrial start-ups take as much as seven years to turn a profit (if at all).

Hatzor decided to search for a new industry in the early 1980s, and also undertook a painstaking and prolonged process of defining the goals of its existing enterprises. It took the kibbutz until 1987 to find a new project that was both available and affordable. Solbar Hatzor, a limited company (a concept once antithetical to kibbutz ideology), crushes soybeans bought mainly from the United States, extracts oil, and makes soybean meal for animal feed, refined oil, protein concentrates for industrial food processing and, more recently, soy isoflavones for dietary supplements. The factory first turned a profit in 1995, almost five years after the kibbutz had initiated a strategic partnership and sold minority shares to a German company in order to make Solbar competitive on the world market.

The process of economic recovery for Hatzor took nearly a decade. During this period, the communal budget was limited to the bare essentials, with little or no surplus for investments in housing and an improved standard of living—this at a time when the overall Israeli economy was prospering. In the 1980s, kibbutz living standards fell, particularly in comparison to the socio-economic groups with which members most closely identified in the broader Israeli society. An essay of that time, written by one of the kibbutz movement's leading thinkers, graphically described the transition from "open to blocked horizons." Kibbutz as an idea—and as a reality—ceased to be a source of inspiration, nor did it attract its own younger generation.

Although Hatzor continues to plow its fields, agriculture today cannot be considered a guaranteed source of income, nor can it contribute to the growing expectations of the community it is meant to support. The traditional industrial crops (cotton, corn, potatoes, and so on) are either being replaced by more sophisticated, but also more labor-intensive, forms of agriculture, or the land is being turned over for its real estate value. There are a number of kibbutzim along the coastal plane of Israel actually designated "real estate kibbutzim." And a fight is brewing with the Land Authority: To whom do the profits really belong—to the owners of the land (the state) or to those who plowed the land and fed the people for several generations?

The future of the kibbutz is in industry, the more high-tech the better, and in providing services to the surrounding communities (health, education, entertainment). In addition to Solbar, a brass and aluminum die casting plant at Hatzor manufactures automotive, irrigation, and construction parts. Another company, which produces high-tech boxes for hotel safes, is about to be spun-off in strategic cooperation with a much larger company in Israel. Hatzor has opened its gates to its neighbors by

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offering private preschool education, a kindergarten for autistic children, a therapeutic riding school for children with physical and emotional disabilities, a convalescent and nursing home, a disco built in a former grain silo, and Friday night ballroom dancing. An added value to these initiatives is that they are being led by individuals (many of them women) who previously directed their skills and talents inward to the community, and who now offer important services while earning money for the kibbutz.

Reform I

The founders of the kibbutz, and all those who reject the radical changes taking place over the last decade, argue that there is no connection between the recent economic successes and the years of re-thinking. But they are wrong. The separation of the business sector from the communal services, the transition from a production to a business orientation, the establishment of a board of directors for each of the economic branches, the granting of authority and autonomy to managers (together with the demand that they "manage without excuses")—all this has made a difference. Ironically, in the spirit of the ideological founders, the younger generation of managers forced themselves and their peers to face up to reality, arguing into the late hours of the night that only a dramatic reconstruction would save the kibbutz from itself. The process was painful, because it implied a rejection of ideas that were very deeply rooted, at a time when many of the pioneers were still alive.

Aided by consultants (another alien term) coming from academia and industry, Hatzor adopted in 1990 a set of "Guiding Principles for Economic Recovery":

> 1) The purpose of our economic activity is to create the resources needed to fulfill our social goals. 2) The necessary condition for the survival of the kibbutz as a social entity is its ability to become, once again, a viable economic entity. 3) The way out of the crisis and into economic prosperity is dependent upon the understanding, agreement, and participation of the kibbutz members in converting the social unit of yesterday into a more efficient and profit-making tool for the productive branches—the businesses of the kibbutz. 4) This conversion is not intended to undermine the principles of the kibbutz, such as co-operation, mutual responsibility and support, equality, and so on. Rather, it is the recognition of the importance of the economic needs . . . to ending the crisis, and ensuring the ability of the productive/ business sector to be competitive . . . . 5) The first stage for what is called here the conversion of the social unit relates to the conceptual sphere and the following transformations: from an agricultural culture to an industrial one; from a production to a business orientation; from the existing model in which there is a lot of free time and little money for the members, to a model where there is less free time and more money—looking toward an end where there is more time and more money; from a culture of amateur organization to professional organization . . . . 6) The second stage of adapting the system is a translation of ideas into action—changing the culture of work in the kibbutz: habits, quality of work, rules and norms, doctrines of management, and systems design.

Given that this manifesto was prepared in 1989 and Hatzor only began to see the benefits of its efforts in 1995–1996, it would be fair to conclude that the idea, rooted in a clear understanding of changing historical realities, preceded the deed. The kibbutz voted for the manifesto in 1990, though many people had difficulty accepting the tremendous cultural shift. Long after the vote, they would mutter, "I didn't vote for *this*." With the principles agreed upon, the task of creating new social infrastructures while running the businesses became the mission of a few; the majority went about their daily lives. In time, a gap in perceptions and experiences created ever greater frictions between the opposing camps.

An anecdote sheds some light on the inner feelings behind these frictions. During his high school years, Gary's son Jonathan worked in the turkey farm, assisting Yaron, a veteran paratrooper, in taking four-week-old chicks and nurturing them into full-sized birds, ready to be delivered for slaughter. Yaron, a son of the kibbutz, now fifty years old and deeply committed to the "old kibbutz values," argued bitterly with Jonathan, especially because Gary was strongly identified with the recon-

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struction effort. Recently, Jonathan joined his father on one of his many business trips marketing products for Solbar, the industrial mainstay of the kibbutz's economy. From Hong Kong to Manila to Sydney/Melbourne and back home via Thailand, a very different aspect of kibbutz life came into view. Loyal to his farm boss and sensitive to his feelings, Jonathan asked his father (while they were dining in an open-air Bangkok restaurant), "How do you expect Yaron, who travels from one part of the turkey farm to another at the rate you travel from Tel Aviv to Frankfurt or Singapore, ever to understand why you consider change to be not only inevitable, but essential for kibbutz survival?"

Reform II

The next stage in Hatzor, which actually ran parallel to much of what we've just discussed, addressed the core kibbutz ideology. Three principles shaped the reform: (1) The individual will be directly responsible for his/her income and that of his/her family; (2) The individual will be paid a salary in accordance with the market value of his/her labor, without creating extreme economic differences; and (3) The individual will be able to hold private property within a scheme of things that will maintain a relative degree of equality.

In 1993, following a summer of informal discussions by a self-chosen group of members in their thirties and forties, these principles were presented to an electrified assembly on a traditionally secular Yom Kippur eve:

> The economic, social, and demographic crisis plaguing kibbutz society for nearly ten years also underscores an identity crisis and loss of direction. We contend that for those who, like us, feel a sense of responsibility for this community, for the people living here and for its surroundings . . . there is no alternative but to reflect upon the complex reality and try to influence it with new concepts and ideas . . . . We are aware of the difficulties and dangers ahead, but many of us believe that without the readiness to . . . struggle with fundamental questions . . . the kibbutz will turn into a home emptied of all inhabitants and a vision emptied of all content. If this is . . . the future to which we are destined, our sense of belonging to this place is to be questioned. We . . . have no intention of undermining the rights and the life style of the founding members as a result of these changes. We propose that the kibbutz initiate a discussion on the following explicit goals:
>
> 1) We want a kibbutz that comes closer to prevalent needs and values.
>
> 2) We are interested in a society where individuals enjoy a reasonable standard of living, characterized by a uniquely high quality of life.
>
> 3) We want an open and attractive society, combining the old kibbutz features with the advantages of the system around us; also attracting the younger generation.
>
> 4) We want a society that is limited in its responsibility for the individual to areas such as education, health, and communal welfare services.
>
> 5) We are interested in a society in which there is an agreed upon, but limited, degree of collectivism, equality, mutual responsibility, and social security.

This "model for change" in Hatzor was conceived, debated, revised, voted upon, rejected, and finally approved during the years 1994–2000. Two opposing camps evolved within the kibbutz movement, and in Hatzor, appropriately calling themselves "Kibbutz Tamid" (forever) and "Kibbutz Atid" (future). The basic assumption of the former is that the traditional kibbutz way of life can and should be sustained, but throughout the years of debate inside Hatzor—and other kibbutzim engaged in similar processes—this camp failed to offer alternative models that could either stem membership loss or aid in financial recovery, the two central problems. (There are a handful of kibbutzim that are maintaining most of the historic framework of kibbutz collectivism, but for various—and unique—reasons, these few are financially solvent, even wealthy.) The Atid camp claims that there is no future for the kibbutz without radical transformation. The Hatzor "model" is, like all incremental changes, a compromise. In many ways it falls short of achieving even minimal reformist expectations. On the other hand, reaching a consensus that the existing model is no longer possible, making a break from the maxim *From each according to . . .* , and accepting the market as the

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basis for salaries represents a historical point of no return.

Income Distribution

The new model, which received 64 percent of the total votes the second time around, has three income components: equal distribution, seniority, and differential salaries. Each of these is evaluated and calculated separately, and then the three are combined. The composite income is issued as an allowance—members still don't receive their work salaries directly. The three components are calculated together and distributed in monthly allotments.

The first component consists in those values and services that are equally distributed by the community, based on family size. The Kibbutz differentiates between goods such as health, education, and welfare, which are guaranteed under the principle of "mutual responsibility" and never questioned in the new model, and additional subsidies for the individual and the family (including children, based on age). The distribution of subsidies is determined by the actual budget of the community, the amount of money available from salaries, social security, tax benefits, dividend payments from businesses, and so on, *after* the "mutual responsibility" goods are guaranteed. Ninety percent of the budget of the members is then divided, *x* shekels for each member (equal for all) plus *y* shekels for each child, depending upon age. This further allocation is made possible by extensive privatization of goods that were once distributed freely, that is, food, laundry, certain alternative medicines, higher education, electricity, and so on.

The second component is seniority. Each kibbutz member is granted four points per year of seniority, valued right now at 25 shekels per point; that is, 20 years x 4 x 25 = 2,000 shekels per month. It should be noted that veterans of retirement age receive an alternative allowance to the third (salary) component, comparable to the median salary in the kibbutz. The guaranteed allowance of retirees is higher than their current kibbutz budget, although they now receive less than those of working age. On the other hand, health care for the aged is guaranteed, while current workers are rebuilding a pension fund that was decimated in the crisis of the 1980s, and these factors tend to even out real income. Seniority points are currently designed to benefit not only the retired veterans but members in their fifties and sixties, still working but hard-pressed to make the transition to higher paying jobs in the workplace. Their years worked are credited to them, whereas the younger generations will see less income from this component.

The third component combines differential salaries with progressive taxes intended to close the income gap. The first principle is that salaries are determined by the market and not by kibbutz values or standards. From businesses to social services, health to education, there is no other method of evaluation. More than fifty of the two hundred members of working age are employed outside the kibbutz. They already know how to negotiate with employers. Others are teachers or nurses, collectively represented by Histadrut-affiliated trade unions. The transition to differential salaries in the kibbutz businesses and services was instituted two years ago, well before this had a bearing on actual allowances. Undoubtedly, some businesses were paying "low" salaries in order to show higher profits to the kibbutz. The new model requires that businesses (industry, agriculture, and services) first pay fair salaries. Their economic viability should not be at the expense of the kibbutz worker, not to speak of hired workers from outside the kibbutz.

THE MOST serious outcries of discontent were heard when members learned how their work was being valued. Managers had to explain themselves, and more often than not make salary adjustments. A committee was created, appropriately called "Workers' Representatives," to assist members in improving their salary levels. Suddenly, member-workers were forced to negotiate with their peers, their neighbors, the caretakers for their children, even their own family members. Consultants from outside the kibbutz helped managers determine salaries based upon the Israeli workplace, and also assisted in the mediation process. However, "objective" outsiders didn't always succeed in tempering hurt feelings and the damaged self-image of those who had always done what the kibbutz expected of them.

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From the venerable janitor (*hatzran* is a kibbutz term that has a much deeper connotation) to the aging farmers in the failing agricultural branches, disappointment and even bitterness became a central motif of the public debate.

However, the purpose of the model and the differential sphere was not to create income differences but to establish categorically that for the kibbutz to survive work must have an economic value and not just a social one. Therefore, principle two was to institute a rather draconian progressive tax on salaries, similar to that in Scandinavian societies. For the higher salaried members, income tax is as high as 80 percent. There is no tax on the minimum wage (which is also higher than in the rest of Israel). Moreover, a subsidy is to be given to workers in relatively low-income brackets, where for every hour of overtime the community contributes fifteen shekels, which is paid directly to the member.

This last feature, overtime wages paid to the individual, was the only difference between the model that was originally rejected and the one finally approved. Perhaps it made the difference; perhaps the eventual acceptance of the reform was the result of a long-term psychological adjustment; perhaps it was simply the end of a process of attrition from years of debate. In any case, the new model was put into effect in March 2000, to be reviewed again at the end of the fiscal year. Inevitably, discrepancies will arise, as in all communities and states. The transition from public to private funds, while members continue to look to the community for support, may result in deficit spending and/or social unrest. The Economic Council (directors of the different kibbutz businesses with communal representatives) has been forewarned that additional investment will be required to complete the housing construction begun three years ago. The Economic Council is also responsible (since 1998) for rebuilding the members' pension fund.

The new model fails to address some of the more fundamental disparities, resulting, for example, from members holding private property outside the kibbutz. But the foundations of the model are amendable, open to incremental changes as a result of trial and error. The Workers Representatives Committee is headed by one of the key opponents of change in Hatzor, which is both a sign of acceptance and a guarantee of workers' rights (for those who might question the integrity of the reform leaders). Finally, the most dramatic feature of the final vote was the lack of drama. No celebrations. No protests. No emotional breakdowns. The day after the vote was like all other days; kibbutz members seemed to be waiting to see how their daily lives would change, for better or for worse. If the kibbutz can be retooled so that it is economically viable, and if it can transform itself from a communist to a social democratic community, it might once again become a home for its young people and a model for a just society, in Israel and elsewhere in the world. ●

GARY BRENNER, originally from Los Angeles, joined Kibbutz Hatzor in 1971, marrying someone from a founding family of Hatzor, and raising his own family there. A member of Kibbutz Hatzor, he has served as the secretary-general (*maskir*) of the kibbutz, international emissary for the Kibbutz Artzi Movement, and is currently marketing director of Solbar. JO-ANN MORT lives in New York and writes extensively on Israeli, Mideast, and Jewish issues. Her membership in Hashomer Hatzair, the Kibbutz Artzi youth movement, introduced her to democratic socialism. She is a frequent visitor to Hatzor.

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Growing Up Liberal

George Packer

BLOOD OF THE LIBERALS, *from which this piece is excerpted, tells the private and public story of three generations in the twentieth century. My maternal grandfather, George Huddleston, was a populist congressman who represented Birmingham, Alabama, from 1915 to 1937. He began his career fighting the princes of wealth on behalf of the steelworkers and coal miners and dirt farmers in his district, and he ended it opposing the New Deal on behalf of Jeffersonian principles. His youngest child, my mother, married a Jewish law professor and left Alabama for the West Coast, where my father taught at Stanford. My father became an academic administrator just in time for the student revolution. In 1969, after announcing his plans to leave the administration and return to teaching, he suffered a massive stroke that paralyzed his right side. Three years later, when I was twelve, he took his own life.*

I grew up during the years of liberal defeat. Every fourth November a general election came along to confirm that the ideas on which my parents had raised me were discredited. Every presidential race offered a new victim in the line of liberal losers, each more hapless than the last on his way to the chopping block: McCarthy, Humphrey, McGovern, Carter (who, after winning one election, couldn't stop losing), Mondale, Dukakis. These years gave me the unconscious feeling that a liberal was a man in a wheelchair.

The faith of my ancestors was born two hundred years before me, in the century of Jefferson, in the philosophical creed of human liberty and self-government. A hundred years later, in my grandfather's youth, it found a plain raspy voice in Populism and fought the princes of wealth in the name of the common man. A half-century after that, in my father's and mother's youth, it came to power in the modern state and made government activism its signature. A few decades after that, when I was a small boy, it ascended to the status of a cultural elite. Then, in a few short years, it ripped itself apart over the three great issues of the sixties: race, war, and student revolt. It began by speaking for all mankind, and by 1972, when George McGovern was wiped out by Richard Nixon, it spoke for Massachusetts and Washington, D.C.

My inheritance was paid in a devalued currency. By the time I entered adolescence, liberalism seemed only able to thrive in the rarefied world of college campuses and eccentric city precincts.

A quick and partial list of some of the beliefs I was raised on:

- It's wrong to send rockets to the moon when we have problems on Earth that need money.
- Taxes should be higher for the rich and the "well-off." Complaints about high taxes are a sign of racism and mean-spiritedness.
- Government spending on everything but defense is good.
- American military actions are suspect. So is personal display of the flag. So is the presidency.
- The cold war is a given, and permanent. So the point of foreign policy should be to shed as little blood as possible.
- Communism is bad, but not as bad as fascism. Just before our ill-fated 1971 trip to Europe, we canceled plans to visit fascist Spain and Greece (I was taken to see Z as an object lesson), but Leningrad was eliminated from the itinerary only for logistical reasons, on the theory that things had gotten worse in coun-

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tries under fascism but communism had made socio-economic improvements over what it replaced.

- As long as they don't hurt anyone else, people should be allowed to live their lives as they please.
- Abortion should be federally funded because black women will be the ones who can't afford to have one.
- Race is the biggest problem in America. Race, meaning black and white, trumps everything else. Black claims on society are always valid. Black nationalism is regrettable in some ways but also necessary for group self-esteem. But integration is the ideal.
- In order of importance, second after blacks come the poor. The poor aren't poor by some fault of their own, nor is capitalism the root cause of poverty. They are simply the poor, and as such they deserve compassion and taxpayers' dollars. Welfare is organized compassion, therefore a good thing. A restructured economy is not on the table, and even the notion of the poor becoming productive working members of society isn't given much thought. They will always be poor—they will always deserve help.
- The most crucial social distinction isn't money but education. To be educated means that whatever your political views and income level, you have a set of cultural traits and tastes that make you someone who could sit comfortably at our dinner table.
- The working class and the lower middle class don't exist, except in cultural terms as, for example, the people throwing rocks and screaming curses at the Boston school buses bringing black students to white high schools. They are the least interesting, least attractive people in America.

No system or principle holds the items on this list together, other than a vague imperative to help the weak and otherwise let people be. Yet they went as unchallenged as the virgin birth in a devout Catholic household. Since the values—compassion, tolerance, fairness—were so obviously good, the social policies weren't open to question. Some of these beliefs were little more than reflexes, in my case hereditary reflexes. Say "poverty" and a genetically programmed nerve called "government spending" twitched. Without my father to provide Socratic questioning and scholarly analysis of the issues, the brand of liberalism practiced around the house became moralistic and fiercely partisan. The day of Nixon's resignation speech was the happiest I'd seen my mother in years.

By the early seventies, liberalism could claim to have secured a great many of the best things in American life: the eight-hour day, the end of child labor; widespread distribution of prosperity as a result of the postwar social contract between government, business, and labor; federal programs that had drastically reduced poverty in old age and broadened access to education; civil and political rights for blacks and women; greater social equality. Without liberalism, America would have been a much harsher country, less equal and less free.

But by the time I was growing up, liberalism seemed to have achieved what it could and stopped being a vital force for reform. It was becoming a set of fixed positions that went along with a certain way of life peculiar to a narrow social class. I reached none of my political beliefs on my own and was hard-pressed to justify them if challenged. And in Stanford they seldom were challenged.

My breakfast reading had progressed from the backs of Cheerios boxes to the sub-mediocre San Francisco newspaper. I skipped the liberal columnists and ate up conservatives like William Randolph Hearst, Jr. and James J. Kilpatrick—their every line boiled my blood and proved me right. At fourteen I wrote an ode to Hearst in rhyming tetrameter couplets probably inspired by Pope, a sarcastic diatribe on all the major issues of the day—"What shall we do with troublesome blacks?/Hang 'em from trees, suspend 'em from racks?" Not even the quadrennial bad news from the outside world could shake me out of my complacency. Nothing confirms righteousness like defeat. The rest of the country just kept getting stupider and meaner. Some day, it would recognize its error and embrace our beliefs.

But every now and then some dissatisfaction would nag at me, a sense that our worldview might be vulnerable, a whiff of hypocrisy or contradiction. Once, during the Bos-

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ton busing crisis (of course we were for busing; there was only a crisis because there were racists), I asked my mother whether she would allow me to be bused from my relatively good junior high school into one of the weaker ones. Probably not, she said—but education meant more to us than to people in South Boston. I choked on this explanation, and perhaps secretly she choked on it, too. One of the liberal ideas had run up against a personal prejudice, leaving scrapes on both—but the idea survived. I had uncovered a serious weakness in our position, yet I went on holding the position. It was too abstract, too untested, to be altered by a collision with reality.

One reality that escaped me and everyone else for years after was that 1973, a year dominated by stories like Watergate, Vietnam pullout, *Roe v. Wade*—in other words, by some fairly colorful fallout from the wars of the sixties—was also the end of one economic era and the beginning of another. Nineteen-seventy-three, the year of the oil crisis, ended the postwar economic boom, which had granted a generation the luxury of revolt. Nineteen-seventy-three began a dreary age of stagnation and scarcity that would make revolt—serious revolt—much less alluring to people my age when we turned eighteen. Nineteen-seventy-three was the year in which average wages began their generation-long decline. All the economic trends of the past two decades—the decline of American manufacturing under pressure from foreign imports, the growing inequality in wealth, the contraction of the middle class, the narrowing of opportunity—began in 1973. After an age in which the vast majority benefited from economic growth, the country was entering a new age of class division, not unlike the period of my grandfather's political career—and yet no class politics arose to meet it, no Populism or Progressivism or New Dealism. Unions were too fat and corrupt to bestir themselves. Liberals and conservatives went on fighting the cultural wars of the sixties for decades.

By 1973 the kind of Americans my grandfather had once visited in their villages, broken bread with at their kitchen tables, and championed on the floor of Congress—working people who wanted fair treatment from business and government—had become the kind of Americans my family knew nothing about. They were "middle Americans," "white ethnics," "Democrats for Nixon," and quietly we feared and despised them, and knew that they hated us. They did not look like the oppressed miners and steelworkers of old Birmingham. They looked like Archie Bunker. They owned two American-made cars and had bad taste. They were probably racist. Their sons were the kids who sometimes jumped me while I was biking through their part of town to junior high (my elementary school, a five-minute bike ride from our house, had been almost all Stanford kids). They seemed unlikely liberal allies—and what's more, liberals no longer spoke their language or knew how to reach them. George Huddleston might have known, but he was long gone.

Busing, welfare, taxes, affirmative action, crime, patriotism—the majority of Americans turned against the liberal position on all the most controversial and divisive issues of the period. The decade of the seventies was one long preparation for Reagan, the signs of conservative revival were everywhere, but even by 1978, when California's Proposition 13 passed in a landslide the year I graduated from high school, ushering in the national tax revolt, I still didn't see it.

Liberalism, the word that the early *New Republic* group brought over from England and gave its modern American use, the word that Herbert Hoover tried and failed to wrest away from Franklin Roosevelt, began in the seventies to acquire the connotations that have made it an epithet, a term of scorn and abuse, a word that dares not speak its name: the "L word." It was becoming known as the creed of the weak, the soft, the guilt-ridden, the hyper-intellectual, the privileged, the out-of-touch, the hypocritical—all those who don't want to see the world as it really is.

During these years a novel appeared that spelled out this view in the obsessive detail of a sadistic (but not stupid) lunatic's nightmare fantasy. When *The Turner Diaries*, written by a Virginia physicist named William Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald, was first published in 1977, no one noticed. Its meticulously recorded vision of a savage revolt by an

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underground Nazi brotherhood against multicultural America was too extreme to catch the imagination of an indulgent, self-absorbed age. For two decades the book was passed hand to hand among hardcore neo-Nazis. Then, in 1995, it suddenly surfaced to achieve a kind of cult infamy as the bedtime reading of Timothy McVeigh in the months before the Oklahoma City bombing. By then, years of white backlash and anti-government rhetoric and economic decline had made *The Turner Diaries* palatable to a sizeable subculture of angry rejects and freelance desperados.

A truly crude piece of writing sometimes gives a clearer sense of the mental atmosphere of its time than more subtle and sophisticated work. The grotesque distortions of unchecked fantasy can sound like broadcasts direct from the political unconscious. Ten or fifteen years later, they emerge toned-down as acceptable public speech. In the same way that the burst of utopian novels following Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* gives a strong sense of the late nineteenth-century Populist mindset, its optimism and its paranoia, *The Turner Diaries* reads like an exaggeration of the hatreds that would contaminate conservatism in the late twentieth. A passage describing liberalism could have been uttered, two decades later and mildly censored, on the *Rush Limbaugh Show*:

> The corruption of our people by the Jewish-liberal-democratic-equalitarian plague which afflicts us is more clearly manifested in our soft-mindedness, our unwillingness to recognize the harder realities of life, than in anything else.
>
> Liberalism is an essentially feminine, submissive world view. Perhaps a better adjective than feminine is infantile. It is the world view of men who do not have the moral toughness, the spiritual strength to stand up and do single combat with life, who cannot adjust to the reality that the world is not a huge, pink-and-blue, padded nursery in which the lions lie down with the lambs and everyone lives happily ever after.
>
> Nor should spiritually healthy men of our race even want the world to be like that, if it could be so. That is an alien, essentially Oriental approach to life, the world view of slaves rather than of free men of the West.
>
> But it has permeated our whole society. Even those who do not consciously accept the liberal doctrines have been corrupted by them....Yes, the inability to face reality and make difficult decisions, that is the salient symptom of the liberal disease. Always trying to avoid a minor unpleasantness now, so that a major unpleasantness becomes unavoidable later, always evading any responsibility to the future—that is the way the liberal mind works.

The Turner Diaries' answer is to hang blacks and Jews from lampposts around Los Angeles. It inspired McVeigh to kill 168 people for the crime of being in a federal building. It isn't just a bad book, it's an evil one. Nonetheless, like many extreme fantasies, its violent cartoon picture of contemporary liberalism contains a glimmer of truth.

In the pink-and-blue, padded nursery of Stanford, the seventies were like a long anti-climax to the high-drama sixties in which parents and older brothers and sisters had played leading roles. My friends and I got to live out history as farce. What remained of the spirit of youthful revolt was basically drugs and pranks. When Nixon was trapping himself in the coils of his Watergate tapes, my friend Lewis Cohen and I sang "Jail to the Chief, he's a mighty motherfucker" and drew Xs one by one across the mug shots on his bedroom poster of all the president's convicted men, waiting for the day when the unindicted co-conspirator with the beady eyes would get his. The sordid language of Watergate entered our vocabulary with knowing snickers: ratfucking, Deep Throat, stonewall, dirty tricks, big enchilada, hush money—above all, impeach. Impeach the President! Nixon's father should have pulled out sooner! Watergate was a joyride (and how unfair it was that my father missed by just a few months his old enemy's slide into disgrace). No one could have scripted a better story line for early adolescence. My high school literary magazine ran a poem, after Ginsberg, that went: "Nixon, America/They don't rhyme at all/How can I write a poem/About such a jerk?" This alongside anarchic neo-Dylan verse that began with lines like "Yogurt round my toes goes/Plippety-plop." The two poems basically expressed the same point of view, the view from

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a comfortable underground, where Kurt Vonnegut was saying "So it goes" and back issues of *Mad* magazine were piling up and the worst thing you could be called was "conventional."

This wasn't organized political activism, it was a mood—premature cynicism against a backdrop of vaguely anti-authoritarian hi-jinks. Lighting a joint at lunchtime, going to an impeachment rally, or sneaking into Memorial Auditorium to catch a screening of Linda Lovelace doing her trick were equivalent acts of protest against—not really against the System, because the System had visibly broken down and was being hounded from all corners. But against something. Maybe just against. When my grandfather said "No is always right," knee-jerk rebellion wasn't what he had in mind.

We thought of ourselves as the good guys, even idealists, somehow continuing in the footsteps of civil rights and anti-war marchers, as if a straight line ran from Birmingham and Selma through Columbia and Kent State to the subversive R. Crumb-like cartoons that littered the senior-class portraits in the yearbook. But our idealism was more assumed than available. On the one hand I held the moral high ground on all the issues of the day, and on the other hand I was a casual cynic. At home I kept the vigil on behalf of the poor and the blacks, and at school I took on the principal over a story—my own—published in the literary magazine I helped edit that employed the phrase "Fuck off." It was a story (loosely autobiographical) about a boy of roughly my fifteen years who throws up after swallowing too many tequila sunrises at a New Year's Eve party. I regarded its publication as an act of artistic and political struggle, a moment of existential self-definition. I might have even set the phrase off in its own tiny paragraph where it would be most conspicuous. The principal got complaints from parents, and I was called into his office. A copy of the magazine lay on his table; a moment later he walked in and gave me a look that said, "Don't tell me it was an act of artistic and political struggle. You were having fun—and now you're a pain in my ass."

We were having fun. Nothing needed to be built; the point was to laugh and mock until structures of power toppled over from sheer embarrassment. The Stanford Marching Band, having come a long way from the days when Herbert Hoover managed the football team, ridiculed Jerry Falwell during a halftime show, a giant marijuana leaf painted inside the tuba player's horn. As for the good society, we had it right there in California: well-funded, pre-Prop. 13 public schools and a lax curfew. Basically, we had the New Deal plus sixties liberation. Nixon might be president, or Ford, or Carter, who made liberalism look like no fun at all (and wasn't much of a liberal), but we were right, and anyone who didn't see it that way probably didn't know what a reefer or a blow job was either.

If I think back to the mental world of my teens, what comes to mind is a Richard Pryor record, *That Nigger's Crazy*, which my friends and I listened to endlessly and secretly. In one routine, Pryor imagines the reception Nixon gets from the brothers when he arrives in prison. "Wha's happenin', Tricky Dick? Yeahhhh. We gonna see how tricky you are." Raised on Vietnam and Watergate and *Saturday Night Live*, how could we take politics seriously? Compare this early political education to my grandfather's—Southern defeat, rural poverty, farmers' and workers' revolt—or to my parents'—the Great Depression, government activism, war against fascism—and you begin to see how badly prepared we were to be responsible. But the choice for every generation is ultimately between taking politics seriously and letting power and wealth go unchecked.

Through junior high, high school, and college, I enjoyed an ideological free ride through a scenery of billboard slogans and low amusements—until, ten years after my father's death, I decided to get off and see what lay behind the fun house. ●

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Good-bye to All That?

Elegies for the Book

Steven J. Zipperstein

NEAR THE BEGINNING of A. S. Byatt's novel *Possession: A Romance*, an obscure, despondent literary scholar, Roland Mitchell, has a thought that will preoccupy him throughout the remainder of the book. It will inspire his subsequent growth as an intellectual and also as a man. "He felt as though he was prying, as though he was being uselessly urged on by some violent emotion of curiosity—not greed, curiosity, more fundamental than even sex, the desire for knowledge."

A spate of books—discursive volumes built mostly out of personal essays—has appeared in recent years that seeks to explore just this: the incomparable pull of words on the page. What sets them apart from other, earlier books on books is an internal tension between lyrical evocation of the pleasures of book reading, collecting, even handling, and a keen uneasiness about the future of those very pleasures. Edgy, and often infused with an air of resignation, these books little resemble Robert Alter's *The Pleasures of Reading* (1989) or Andrew Delbanco's *Required Reading* (1997), both products of the culture wars of the 1980s and early 1990s. They resemble more the surprisingly large number of recent books about the impact on one's mental health of a year or so of reading only Proust. But these books on books are preoccupied by something more basic: the question of whether any serious book—whether by Proust or Graham Greene—will retain in the near future, and in the wake of the cultural changes in technology all around us, little more than a cult-like, minuscule following. Will such prose be just about as obscure, even for the intelligent consumers of culture, as the English of the King James Bible seems today? These books on books bristle with anxiety or, at least, the sense that theirs is a record of past pleasures that may never be replicated. Some are angry, others exude despair; they represent an intriguing, curious manifestation of fin-de-siècle unease.

The fundamental question underlying them is, quite simply, whether books—like, say, fountain pens or manual typewriters—are now, or will soon be, the province of the picturesque, remnants of a slower, bygone age. They take for granted that ours is a time in which both the production and dispersal of human knowledge is being redefined. What does this mean, they ask, about the future of knowledge and literacy, and, perhaps more pertinently, about the future of a subtle, supple take on the world that so many have credited to extensive, expansive reading? Is Bill Gates—whose name, as I recall, appears in none of these books but whose ubiquitous achievements seem to haunt them all—the Genghis Khan of literacy or Gutenberg's natural heir?

It's worth noting that these are all books written by authors just at the cusp of middle age—writers aware now, no doubt more acutely than a few years earlier in their lives, of the impermanence of things, of how easily one's cultural influence or stature or centrality can just melt in the air. The unease that they express, no doubt, is a reflection of these natural, temporal shifts. Still, the new, drastic shifts in the technology of information—as the book trade used to be called—are stark; comparisons to the epoch of Gutenberg are, arguably, not exaggerated, and these gnawing cultural fault lines are by no means visible only to graying, anxiety-prone baby-boomers.

These are personal, self-referential works. Anne Fadiman, the most explicit in this regard, proposes repeatedly in *Ex Libris* (1998) that love of books is experienced at a pitch unlike anything except, perhaps, the erotic. Nearly all

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are built around an exploration of deep, sustained impulses. These have meant that since childhood the authors, much like the young Copperfield, have read "as if for life." "Books," writes Fadiman, "wrote our life story, and they accumulated on our shelves (and on our windowsills, and underneath our sofa, and on top of our refrigerator), and they became chapters in it themselves. How could it be otherwise?" Self-important, perhaps, but these are explorations of the prospect of loss almost unthinkable.

Anna Quindlen's *How Reading Changed My Life* (1998) is a breezy work built out of assertions that are too bald, even if they are mostly true. For example: "Of all the many things in which we recognize some universal comfort—God, sex, food, family, friends—reading seems to be the one which the comfort is the most undersung, at least, publicly." Both Fadiman and Quindlen sing loudly their praise of books. Quindlen's is, by far, the cheerier of the two volumes. What Quindlen knows she seems to know for certain, and among her truisms is the knowledge that books will continue to remain crucial because "too many people love [books] so. . . . It is not simply that we need information, but that we want to savor it, carry it with us, feel the heft of it under our arm. We like the thing itself." Her book—it's a pamphlet, really—offers up a collection of nice moments spent with books. She recognizes that there is "something in the American character that is even secretly hostile to the act of aimless reading." She recalls her first encounter with an apartment (Elizabeth Hardwick's) where the life of the mind seemed exemplified by an actual room: "It was as though my life had somehow come true at the moment I stepped into that room." She has useful things to say about the ways in which women read, and how literature has tended to encourage in books for girls an interplay between reading and friendship lacking in the best-loved volumes produced for boys.

Certainly she is aware of new developments—in technology, in the mall, and in the mega-bookstore—that challenge her confidence in a world where bright people will always gravitate toward the printed word. "It is true that department stores no longer sell books, and that many of what pass for bookstores seem closer to gift shops . . . . It's a little terrifying, the fact that in many of the mall stores there is an entire long wall classified as Fiction and a small narrow section to one side of it called Literature . . . . [a] section . . . reserved largely for dead people, dead people who represent much of the best the world of words has had to offer." Still, books will remain—for her, for others, too, always—"the destination, and the journey. They are home."

Fadiman is more elegiac, and also more interesting. She was born into a family of voracious (and distinguished) readers—her father is the well-known editor Clifton Fadiman—and she writes brief, often lovely essays around the celebration of things rarely openly celebrated. She writes about fountain pen nibs, she describes those odd shelves where we place books inessential but ever engrossing (her own shelf contains books on polar exploration). Perhaps the best chapter, entitled "Never Do That to a Book," divides all readers between those whose adoration of books is "platonic" and those like herself for whom reading more resembles "carnal love." "To us," she writes, "a book's words were holy but the paper, cloth, cardboard, glue, thread, and ink that contained them were a mere vessel, and it was no sacrilege to treat them as wantonly as desire and pragmatism dictated. Hard use was a sign not of disrespect, but of intimacy."

She comes back often to the theme of the interplay between reading and carnal love. "The most private of all readings," she writes, "are performed by lovers. I remember sharing my college boyfriend's narrow bed one afternoon, lying head-to-toe in order to postpone temptation until the end of the study session, handling a huge maroon edition of *The Romantic Poets* back and forth while we took turns reading from Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience.' We didn't get far. Seven hundred years earlier, Paolo and his sister-in-law Francesca had run into trouble doing something along the same lines: 'Time and again our eyes were brought together/by the book we read; our faces flushed and paled.' They were reading Lancelot du Lac to each other, and when they reached Guinevere's forbidden kiss, their own fate was sealed. As Francesca dis-

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creetly put it in canto V of Dante's *Inferno*, 'That day we read no further.' "

In contrast to Fadiman or Quindlen, Lynne Sharon Schwartz is far more skittish about what it means to spend a life with books. What is, perhaps, most impressive about her *Ruined By Reading* (1996) is her willingness to ask tough, even awful, questions about what it means to live for reading, and what else in life one simply, even miserably, loses out on as a result. Are there, she asks, other sources than reading that can, in fact, impart true knowledge? Her parents' home, too, was bookish, but also stolidly pragmatic. All reading (even of Kafka) was put to good, practical use. Her own haphazard, voracious reading was deemed eccentric, an obsession, and she now fears this may have been so. Instead of eating breakfast, she devoured the print on the packages on the table. Visual knowledge meant nothing; life beyond books was of marginal interest, at best. "Was I living, I wondered when I first read . . . or simply reading? Were books the world, or at least a world? How could I 'live' when there was so much to be read that ten lives could not be enough? And what is, anyway, this 'living'? Have I ever done it?"

In this unsettling, rather rattled love poem to reading, Schwartz refuses to let herself—or readers like herself—off the hook. Reading, she realizes, has much occupied her life. It is a life she refuses to renounce, but still she remains aware of how this quest for knowledge or thrills ("more than anything else, readers are thrill-seekers") can itself be a form of self-indulgence. "What do I have, then, after years of indulgence? A feel, a texture, an aura: the fragrance of Shakespeare, the crisp breeze of Tolstoy, the carnal stench of the great Euripides. Are they worth the investment of a life? Would my mind be more free without them?"

Schwartz cites a Buddhist named Cha, who claims that his beliefs have "curbed his appetite for books." She finds his self-restraint intriguing, but also, in the end, bizarre. Immeasurably more threatening are the machines surrounding her, with their manuals written in monosyllabic tongue—these are packaged as things seemingly benign, but they constitute fierce challenges, as she sees it, to the best that life offers. "When my younger daughter translates the manuals into narrative form I too can make the machines work . . . .I feel the familiar comfort of language performing its original task. If those of us who live by language become superfluous in years to come, it will not be because of the advance of technology, but the loss of coherent discourse."

It is just this point that is at the center of Sven Birkerts's wild, precocious book *The Gutenberg Elegies* (1994). Birkerts has made a career as a Luddite-like foe of the new information age. *The Gutenberg Elegies* is best read as a stark manifesto aimed at the serious, non-specialist reader of the recent past. Schwartz's doubts about the superiority of a life spent in reading don't surface here. Birkerts is engaged in a concerted, unambiguous defense against the grim illiteracy of the computer age, which he, too, relates in the first person, as his own story.

He writes of a life with its ample share of pitfalls, deep depressions, sudden, unforeseen reversals, with valuable time lost in useless pursuits, in empty, listless relationships. What saved him, in the end, were books, and these, too, are now at risk: "Suddenly it feels like everything is poised for change; the slower world that many of us grew up with dwindles in the rearview mirror. The stable hierarchies of the printed page—one of the defining norms of that world—are being superseded by the rush of impulses through freshly minted circuits. The displacement of the page by the screen is not yet total . . . but the large-scale tendency in that direction has to be obvious to anyone who looks."

Birkerts admits that he is culling the shards of many, many late-night conversations with friends. What these amount to, in the end, is his insistence that the computer revolution puts at risk "the formerly stable system—the axis with writer at one end, editor, publisher, and bookseller in the middle, and reader at the other end." This means that the "old act of slowly reading a serious book" is increasingly "an elegiac exercise." Once this is undermined, our spiritual values, even subjectivity, might well disappear. He already sees some of this in his college classroom where students can't read

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Henry James. This is not because of his complex syntax, but because they have little experience with subtlety, with indirection, with the inwardness that James explores. Their electronically circumscribed world completely denies them these experiences. Birkerts looks at their bland, blank faces, and sees a "momentous paradigm shift," the loss of all but the most straightforward, linear, and flat forms of thought.

He made his own way, laboriously, into the world of books via the dusty, dank, and now-increasingly imperiled world of the secondhand bookstores. Birkerts was eventually possessed by Jack Kerouac, not so much by his evocation of the road as by the way Kerouac rendered seemingly mundane, unliterary experiences into literature. The crash pads of Kerouac's novels and also the slums of Henry Miller's were, in Birkerts's mind, the natural backdrop to literature, which made him all the more susceptible to the discrete charms of secondhand bookstores. Here he met those rueful, isolated figures that so dominated the secondhand book trade when he came of age. Their sullen, taciturn attitude toward the world meshed nicely with the mess they made of their stores—a mess that promised a glimpse into the confounding brilliance of bohemia. He made his way out of all this, but it left its deep imprint on him. In fact, it provided him with a reason to live: "Basically, I was rescued by books."

All this, Birkerts insists, is at risk. He doesn't deny that "isolated readers"—no doubt, a good many of them—still exist. It is the broader, nonacademic audience for serious books that is fast dwindling. "Our culture feels impoverished; it lacks the kind of animation that regular exposure to ideas and works of imagination supplies." For him, Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* is that essential touchstone, the artifact that represents "our culture at a moment of anxious wakefulness." To chart the cultural trajectory of America from this book's publication, in 1950, to the 1990s is to trace a "downward curve." Gone is that "common reader" to whom Trilling—much like Virginia Woolf—addressed his work. (Fadiman, too, subtitles her book *Confessions of a Common Reader.*) An entire literary intelligentsia once wrote with eyes fixed on just such readers. Now, even when such an intelligentsia exists, it is rootless, cut off from its essential task, consigned, at best, to an ever-young, rarefied, elite university audience who themselves are less and less interested in them. These arguments are familiar enough, and Birkerts echoes many assertions made in Russell Jacoby's well-known screed *The Last Intellectuals* (1987). In *The Last Intellectuals*, however, there is no index reference for computers or technology or anything having to do with new means of information, which were then just beginning to emerge from the garages of Palo Alto. There the foil was the university, not the computer industry. Birkerts's foe is far more elusive, more canny, and, as he sees it, immeasurably more potent.

Birkerts views himself, too, as an opponent of the sequestering of knowledge in the university. He sees it as a dangerously elitist destination for wisdom, with the university's monopoly of high literacy resulting in the erection of an intellectually thin society. True, he appreciates that his own vision of the past—with its ideal readers sitting intently, with long hours of leisure at their disposal, nurtured by the allusive sentences of Henry James or Lionel Trilling—is, in its own way, little less elitist. But liberalism must, he insists, come to terms with the strenuous demands made by culture, which, taken seriously, requires much quiet contemplation, a degree of isolation, and the slow rumination showcased in Trilling's brilliant criticism. The alternative is, alas, a world full of cant, a world of slogans, an empty place in which democracy itself is threatened.

Birkerts undoubtedly has a static notion of reading—itself a product of the first few decades of the nineteenth century. It was best distilled in this century in the United States, as he reconstructs it, by those fierce, uncompromising critics of the *Partisan Review* and other allied periodicals, in the 1940s. He cites, approvingly, Robert Darnton's observation in *The Kiss of Lamourette* that "reading has a history. It was not always and everywhere the same . . . . As our ancestors lived in different mental worlds, they must have read differently, and the history of reading could be as complex as the history of thinking." But Birkerts remains con-

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vinced that reading—when done best—is the product of a stable, and, as he seems to see it, time-treasured set of exchanges. These mean well-oiled relations between the common reader in an overstuffed chair, the writer at his or her desk, the eager, erudite publisher at the press, the Grub Street reviewer in a garret, and, finally, the bookseller—kindly, muddled, Dickensian—in a wood-paneled, unkempt shop.

A bracing antidote to Birkerts's grim vision can be found in Henry Petroski's *The Book on the Bookshelf* (1999). This author, a distinguished engineer at Duke best known for histories of pencils and bridges, aims to provide a gentle reminder of the potential beneficence of technology. Interspersed in a text of well-told, lucid tales of libraries—ancient, medieval, and modern; built and rebuilt; of books stored in piles, with spines visible or invisible; libraries with lecterns; and, only much later, with desks—are accounts of the nexus between human need and technological response. He recalls, for instance, the very recent origins (late seventeenth century) of libraries, private and public, with now-standard, seemingly timeless, freestanding desks and bookcases flat against the walls. "[M]odern journalistic practices," Petroski writes, "may seem to be a long way from a scribe copying or a Gutenberg setting lines of type from a manuscript bible, but there is a certain sameness to it all. That is what makes the history of technology interesting and relevant; it not only teaches us about the way things used to be done; it also gives us perspective on how things are done today—and how they most likely will be done in the future."

Petroski traces the evolution of book storage from ancient Alexandria, through the flat chests commonly used by medieval monks for manuscript storage, to the construction of the great libraries of Europe, and elsewhere. He examines the history of the library in the context of a complex interplay of competing demands. These included demands made by the mounting, massive quantity of manuscripts (and eventually books), the desire to illuminate these rooms (before, that is, the invention of electric lighting), the fear of fire, and, at the same time, the fear of book deterioration caused by sunlight. He moves deftly from past to present, from a detailed depiction of the innovative design of the library of St. John's College, Cambridge, to his own library carrel at Duke. He traces the construction of the New York Public Library and its sixty-three miles of shelving (already in 1910), and he cites statistics that predict that if Yale continues to expand its library at its current rate, by 2040 it will have to accommodate some two hundred million books. He also shows, repeatedly, how comparable predictions have proven lame, how they simply can't take into account the contingency, the sheer messiness at the heart of the relationship between human needs and technological response.

Things fixed permanently in time and space, it would seem (and what appears more fixed in time and space than bookshelves surrounding desks?) are rendered unstable in this exasperating, sedate, but also often stunning book. Typical of Petroski's essentially intuitive approach to everyday things, their surprising origins and their uncertain futures, are his observations about the fluid relationship between bookstores, old and new:

> Not all studies or bookshops need even present the prospect of their bookshelves being painted or stained. Among the latest shops are those on the Internet, of course, and whether new or used these tend to have no shelves that the customer will ever see. The convenience of these virtual shops with virtual bookshelves can be enormous, their titles seemingly countless, and their prices attractive . . . .As the poet Marianne Moore knew imaginary gardens with real toads in them, we now can know imaginary shelves with real books on them.

Petroski's universe is one where technology seeks to respond sensibly—and with, perhaps, an uncanny, unlikely, smoothness—to human needs; Birkerts's is one where technology threatens to supplant them, to remake human needs into something fundamentally inhumane. For Petroski, our bookshops, our libraries, all our sources of information are in a state of creative, if also confounding change. For Birkerts, these same changes presage something sinister, something that promises to di-

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minish not only language and imagination, but all that a good life can offer. Petroski's tone is calm, measured, and reasonable because, as he sees it, we are faced with confusing, but not wholly unprecedented changes in the history of information. In contrast, Birkerts sees us as basically trapped in an impossibly wired, ridiculously loud, culturally flattened echo chamber that is itself a pretty accurate description of the bookstores of the future. Pepys, for one, would faint at the mere sight of such places, and would set off immediately (in Birkerts's view, I suspect) to the familiar comforts of the brothel. As Petroski seems to suggest, in contrast, Pepys (whose extraordinary innovations in book storage are described at length in his book) would embrace sagely the technologies of our own age, too. What would Pepys have thought? What, indeed, should we?

I WRITE THESE words in a building on the Stanford campus carved out of limestone, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead at the turn of the century, when he helped John Stanford transform his massive horse farm into a university. Mine was among the first buildings; the Humanities here remain housed mostly in these older, sedate, dusty buildings, with the sciences, the law school, and the business school in far more plush, up-to-date quarters.

Here I sit in a book-lined study, with shelves of wood (and also, admittedly, a new Dell computer), where I spend my days reading, writing, and speaking with students and colleagues. It is much the same routine as has existed for faculty in the better-endowed universities for much of the century. Outside my window, just across the street, is the business school, which now prepares its students primarily for work in high-tech jobs. Its basement lunchroom has the most aggressive feel on campus. On the streets of my morning commute, I pass company after company at the forefront of the technological transformation that so haunts Birkerts. I don't quite know what I think of them. At times, they seem like little more than brilliant, versatile mechanical tools. At other times, they feel like little less than terrifying Golems, inanimate objects now endowed, more than ever, with an eerie power that promises to flatten, not enhance, a power that could help obscure one of life's greatest, most sustained pleasures.

When I consider their impact, I conflate it with the fact that both my favorite bookstores here—one for new books and the other for used books—shut down in the last three months. This is, of course, a direct result of the popularity of Web-based book buying and the impact of mega-bookstores. A few blocks from the now-closed secondhand bookstore, a sleek, very, very fashionable shop with wide aisles displaying, it seems, fabulously expensive design books and magazines has opened, and is doing brisk business. These tomes—gorgeous, seductive non-books—are mostly oversized, packed with pictures, and the people who crowd into the shop peruse their pages in ways altogether different, it seems, from "true" readers. They inhale them with their eyes, they move across their pages without the tense, alert attention demanded by books. On their faces one sees obvious, casual pleasure, but not learning. I refuse, on principle, to walk in.

Am I a Luddite smarting in the wake of inescapable change? The analogy feels, at times, all too apt, and I bristle at it. Especially since I, too, cannot resist being deeply impressed by the technological discoveries around me, including electronic books the size of paperbacks containing full libraries. Who can fail to be impressed by the prospect of tiny chips the size of one's shirt buttons that claim to hold all human knowledge acquired since Rousseau?

Wrestling, then, with my darker fears regarding computers and their impact on reading, I'm reminded that serious readers are often now, as in Lionel Trilling's day, rather isolated souls: Trilling's Columbia colleague Richard Hofstadter complained bitterly about—and examined brilliantly—the anti-intellectualism surrounding him in the same years that Birkerts insists were the golden age of high literacy. There were far, far fewer readers of the *Partisan Review* than there are today of either the *New Republic* or the online magazine *Salon*. This despite the waning of the more ambitious efforts at mass education launched in Trillings's day: the GI bill, Mortimer Adler's noble efforts to raise middlebrow tastes, and the once-popular phenomenon of commercial

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book clubs.

There is considerable evidence of widespread, very serious, innovative reading today. Informal, associative book clubs are flourishing where, as often as not, writers' writers (Paul Auster, for example) are showcased. Or look at the way in which books are celebrated in the remarkable Harry Potter series, bestsellers throughout the English-speaking world whose impact on American reading habits has been dramatic. Their spectacular popularity is all the more striking since the books' young protagonists solve their mysteries in the school library. This is the source in every one of the books in the series of great, deep wisdom. They valorize book learning much more, it seems to me, than they glamorize witchcraft, which remains in the books a distant, dazzling fantasy. Books here are the real, potent sources of magic.

IT'S EVEN impossible to savage television as a prime source of today's onslaught on books. Some of television's patron saints have emerged as unlikely, highly influential hawkers of cultural literacy. Turn on television and you find Oprah is, of course, the devotee of new, sometimes obscure, and sometimes truly worthy, significant books. It is easy to poke fun at her, but, arguably, this saccharine talk-show host's impact on the reading habits of the English-speaking world of the early twenty-first century rivals that of the conversationalist Samuel Johnson centuries earlier. It's even impossible to know whether to bemoan or celebrate the impact on contemporary reading habits of Barnes and Noble or Borders. True, like deadly, relentless armies of ants they've eaten up small, independent stores. But their stores are packed with good books and avid readers. The perky protagonist of the film *You've Got Mail* made peace, in the end, with the future, and fell, happily, into the waiting arms of a benign, sweet mega-bookstore owner. A sound decision, or merely a Quisling-like capitulation?

It seems impossible to say. Books on books today have become so personal and so intimate because, written amid these unsettling transformations, their subject is the fate of perhaps the most abiding loves of our lives. For as long as many of us can remember—if we're serious about reading, that is—we've sat with paper in hand, staring at symbols to which we, more frequently than not, credit far more than mere, abiding pleasure. We owe these pages whatever ability we have to see the world with clarity. We credit them, and justly so, with whatever ability we have to see ourselves with generosity and empathy. To imagine these as gone, or truly obscure, to imagine that otherwise intelligent, eager, inquisitive people around us might well feel in ten or twenty years that picking up a book is something quaint is to imagine a postmodern hell. "Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing." Anna Quindlen quotes this passage from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but it could serve as a summation, in one way or another, of the books I've been examining.

I recall standing a few months ago at the information booth at our local Borders and asking where to find the latest issue of the *New York Review of Books*. The clerk looked at me vacuously and asked what that was. I remember thinking that right here, in the midst of mountains of books, was proof of a decline so fundamental that it felt, simply, irreversible. Later, I passed by that same clerk, and I strained to hear him talking. I assumed, of course, he would sound utterly stupid. Instead, I listened to him expound for a while on the popularity of Ricky Martin, what it meant for popular music, for ethnic culture, even sexual politics. His sentences were well formed, his thinking reasonably sophisticated: he seemed ironic, bright, and intellectually alive. I felt chastened, confounded as to what to think. I looked now at the man with more fascination than loathing as I walked by him, clutching my new books close to my heart. ●

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On the Facts

Noam Chomsky

Aryeh Neier's outrage over a "diatribe against NATO's military intervention" ("Inconvenient Facts," *Dissent*, Spring 2000) is understandable: the issues are too serious for that. His essay is presented as a review of my book *The New Military Humanism* (*NMH*), which scarcely mentions the propriety of the NATO bombing. The topic is indeed brought up, three pages from the end, noting that what precedes—the entire book—leaves the question of what should have been done in Kosovo "unanswered," though it seems a "reasonable judgment" that the United States selected the most harmful of several options available. As explained clearly and unambiguously from the outset, even from the title, the book is about a wholly different topic: the import of the Kosovo events for the "new era" of "principles and values" led by the "enlightened states" (to quote from some of the rhetoric reviewed), a matter that must be sharply distinguished from the question of what should have been done.

I also stressed the point that any resort to force must be assessed in terms of its likely human consequences, whatever the motives or past record of the agent. To illustrate, I reviewed the major post–World War II examples of military intervention with benign consequences, along with the U.S. reaction to them, a matter directly relevant to the topic of the book, as is the matter of regular practice, which bears directly on motives and long-term import.

That these are the topics of the book cannot be missed, and has not been by others. The latest review I have seen opens by observing that "Chomsky, however, does not 'contribute to the debate about what should be, or should have been done in Kosovo.' As he explains, the aim of his writing is 'to examine the framework in which events proceeded on their course, with its terrible human toll.'"

These are among the actual topics of the book, which also suggests easy ways to mitigate or terminate comparable or worse atrocities: for example, by withdrawing from participation in them. A leading thesis throughout is "a psychological truism. One of the hardest things to do is to look into the mirror. It is also one of the most important things to do." Neier passes over these matters with a few casual words, which seriously understate the crimes for which he and I share responsibility; Washington did not "tolerate" them, as he puts it, but took an active and decisive role in escalating them, a crucial distinction. It appears that my discussion of U.S. crimes and what we could easily do about them is of little significance to him in comparison with what should have been done about the other fellow's crimes.

I also discussed the reactions of commentators outside of the self-anointed "enlightened states," who warn that NATO's reversion to the "colonial era," "cloaked in moralistic righteousness," is "a danger to the world," and will lead to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction for deterrence (Israeli military analyst Amos Gilboa); and the high-level planning documents of the Clinton years that lend additional substance to these concerns. Significant questions, in my view, but apparently not in Neier's.

I also reviewed available documentation on the perceived circumstances under which the bombing of Kosovo was undertaken—again, a matter highly relevant to motive and import, though it leaves "unanswered" the question of what should have been done. Since then a great deal of additional documentation has been provided by the U.S. State Department, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, the UN, and other

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Western sources. To a degree I found surprising, the new material undermines already dubious factual claims that had been advanced to justify the bombing, including those Neier repeats, and lends support to my original judgment and perhaps even to the more extreme position of commanding general Wesley Clark, who informed the press as the bombing began that a sharp escalation of atrocities was "entirely predictable," and a few weeks later, that the NATO operation was "not designed as a means of blocking Serb ethnic cleansing" or "as a means of waging war against the Serb and MUP forces in Kosovo.... There was never any intent to do that."

By now, it is difficult to escape the conclusion of strategic analyst and former NATO planner Michael MccGwire that "while Serb forces were clearly the instrument of the unfolding 'humanitarian disaster,' NATO's long-trailered urge to war was undoubtedly a primary cause," and reference to the "bombing as 'humanitarian intervention' " is "really grotesque" (*International Affairs*, January 2000). A proper criticism of *NMH* would be that the question was not as "unanswered" as I assumed.

Neier offers one argument to justify the bombing: the atrocities that were the anticipated consequence might have occurred anyway, given Milosevic's terrible record (and likely plans, as discussed in *NMH*). On Neier's principles, a far more humane course would have been to induce Albanian Kosovars to flee and then to bomb Serbs to permit their return. And from the same premises, it follows that we should have opposed the bombing, given Washington's terrible record.

BUT DISCUSSION is academic, since Neier wisely rejects the astonishing principle he puts forth to justify U.S. bombing. To mention only the most obvious illustration, while the campaign was being planned, Indonesian Kopassus commandos, renowned for their brutality, were entering East Timor to carry out "Operation Clean Sweep," renewing atrocities that had already eliminated more than a quarter of the population—"reaching genocidal proportions" by Neier's standards—with decisive U.S. military and diplomatic support for Indonesia's aggression and slaughters. The renewal of large-scale atrocities in early 1999 is reviewed in *NMH*, another topic Neier ignores. On August 6, the East Timorese Catholic Church reported that the army and its paramilitary forces had killed between three thousand and five thousand people in 1999—twice the number of Albanians and Serbs killed in Kosovo the year prior to the bombing. The Indonesian military also gave ample warning of worse to come, as it did. After the August 30 referendum, 750,000 people—85 percent of the population—were brutally expelled while the country was largely destroyed. Throughout, U.S. military aid continued and the official stand remained that "it is their responsibility and we do not want to take it away from them" (reiterated September 8). Under increasing pressure, Clinton finally signaled to the Indonesian generals that they must cease, and they instantly reversed course. After their withdrawal, an Australian-led UN peacekeeping force entered the territory. Washington ensured that there would never be any intervention, and there was none. Our crimes continue in the aftermath, a matter I have reviewed elsewhere.

In the light of past performance and current actions, Neier's principle clearly called for bombing of Jakarta by early 1999 or long before, and bombing of Washington as well. And since the administration refused to adopt this course, his principle requires that honest citizens should have undertaken the task themselves. The same follows for other cases discussed in *NMH*, among them major atrocities within NATO, where right now the Turkish army is once again engaged in ground sweeps in regions of some of the worst ethnic cleansing and other atrocities of the 1990s, with decisive U.S. support (not "toleration") throughout, mounting as atrocities peaked. It is all too easy to add examples. Of course, distinctions must be made, but these only make the conclusions more stark. In short, Neier makes clear that he can think of no way to meet the heavy burden of proof that he agrees is required to support state violence.

As for the rest, I do not share Neier's easy tolerance of the refusal to lift a finger to mitigate ongoing genocide when the agent is a favored state, or the fulsome praise (including

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self-praise) for those who have once again been responsible for terrible atrocities, including the recent murder of leading dissident intellectuals, or the evasion of our awesome crimes by a posture of injured innocence. These hardly seem the proper reactions to crimes for which we share responsibility, and it is curious that a professed advocate of human rights should so strongly disagree. ●

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Aryeh Neier Replies

ORDINARILY, when a writer responds to a review, he discusses what is said in it. As Chomsky can't be bothered, for those who missed what I wrote, I will summarize it in a few sentences.

I said that Chomsky dismisses the claim that NATO acted in Kosovo to protect human rights. The real purpose was to sustain NATO's status, complete Washington's takeover of Europe, and stimulate defense spending. Chomsky made a few valuable points, I said: an important element of the Rambouillet peace accord that intruded excessively on Yugoslav sovereignty was not reported in the West, NATO leaders contradicted themselves over whether they knew in advance that the bombing would lead to an intensification of Serb attacks on Kosovar Albanians, and the bypassing of the UN Security Council received insufficient attention. On the other hand, I criticized Chomsky for *ad hominem* attacks on those who disagree with him, such as his claim that Vaclav Havel flew to Washington to celebrate the 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador. Also, I said his book is dishonest because it argues that NATO's intervention could not be justified by atrocities in Kosovo as only two thousand deaths and two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand forcible displacements took place there in the year prior to the bombing while much worse has taken place elsewhere. The dishonesty is in his failure to mention that NATO intervened because proponents saw Kosovo as the continuation of a decade-long war by Milosevic in which some two hundred thousand were killed and two million were forced to flee their country in Bosnia alone.

Instead of responding to my review, Chomsky conducts a debate with unidentified opponents who apparently used various words and phrases that he puts between quotation marks. For the record, "unanswered," "reasonable judgment," "new era," "principles and values" and "enlightened states" (an oxymoron) are just a few of the terms that I did not use.

TO THE EXTENT that Chomsky actually addresses what I said, it is when he writes: "He [Neier] offers one argument to justify the bombing: the atrocities that were the anticipated consequence might have occurred anyway, given Milosevic's terrible record...." That is at least a near miss. What I actually wrote is that "Atrocities [in Bosnia] reached genocidal proportions"; that "NATO sat by for more than three years before interfering decisively in Bosnia"; and that "many persons in and out of government were determined not to allow a repetition in Kosovo." Nevertheless, I did not argue for the bombing (I believe military intervention was justified, but not as conducted by NATO). Rather, I wrote, "Chomsky could have acknowledged the history in ex-Yugoslavia that inspired the advocates of humanitarian intervention and still argued against NATO's bombing." His failure to acknowledge the history was the basis for my charge of dishonesty. His failure to answer that charge in his response suggests to me that there is no reason to revise it. ●

ARYEH NEIER is president of the Open Society Institute and author of *War Crimes: Brutality, Genocide, Terror and the Struggle for Justice.*

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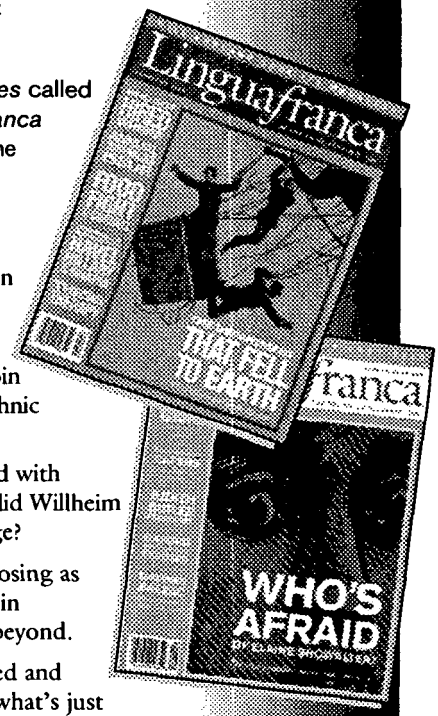

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Re-reading *The Radical Liberal*

Revisiting Arnold Kaufman

Kevin Mattson

ARNOLD KAUFMAN'S *The Radical Liberal* was originally published as an entire issue of *Dissent* and then released as a book by Atherton Press in 1968. Read today, it smacks of its time. One of America's most divisive presidential elections is just around the corner, and liberals are heating up for a face-off over Vietnam and urban riots. This makes the book easy to discard as a relic of this country's tumultuous history during that crash and burn year. But read another way, *The Radical Liberal* offers critical lessons about our contemporary political predicament. In the whirlwind of 1968, Kaufman envisioned what we need today—traditional social democratic policies aimed at ensuring economic equality infused with community-based participatory democracy. In the midst of hectoring and lampooning from the left, he managed to stay attuned to the moral dimension of modern liberalism.

By the time he wrote *The Radical Liberal*, Kaufman had spent a lifetime in numerous New Left political activities. He was no aloof academic but an engaged, activist intellectual. Though too young to be a part of Irving Howe's generational cohort, Kaufman described himself as a "New York immigrant Jew" and attended the alma mater of other famous New York intellectuals, the City College of New York. After a stint in the navy, he acquired a Ph.D. in political philosophy at Columbia University. But Kaufman wanted more than an academic career. During the 1940s, he worked with the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), whose nonviolent direct action fueled the civil rights movement and the New Left. He was also an active member of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), SANE, and numerous labor unions. For a while in the early 1960s, he left for England (where E.P. Thompson's New Left cohorts were "on the move again," to use C. Wright Mills's words), working as a freelance journalist and writing for *Socialist Commentary* regularly. Back in the United States, he lectured on "participatory democracy" at the Port Huron Conference of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In so doing, Kaufman provided much of the intellectual scaffolding that would guide the New Left in its coming years.

In 1965, Kaufman hit on a big idea—the teach-in. Though distinct, this form of political protest fit well with the new model of politics fashioned by the New Left, that of sit-ins, boycotts, and direct action. The teach-in made good on C. Wright Mills's hope that intellectuals would play a special role in the New Left, since it engaged scholars in argument with the powers-that-be over foreign policy. Thirty years before political theorists raved about "deliberative democracy," Kaufman put the ideal into practice first at the University of Michigan (whose all-night teach-in on March 24, 1965, inspired many to follow) and the national teach-in held in Washington, D.C., a few months later. Kaufman explained that teach-ins were "a means of vitalizing the process of discussion and debate without which democracy lacks significance." They were part of "an attempt to build a society which is free because its citizens are thoughtful and informed." The teach-in captured the responsible and common-sense ethic behind so much vague talk about participatory democracy.

In the following years (up to his tragic death in an airplane accident in 1971), Kaufman threw himself into a wide array of political activities. He tried his best to organize a radical pressure group within the Democratic Party. In this spirit, he worked with the Poor People's Movement and formed the Coalition for an

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Open Convention, the New Democratic Coalition (a name tinged with contemporary irony), and the Conference for a Democratic Left. In the process he hooked up with *Dissent*, arguing with the distrustful Irving Howe that the magazine should welcome New Lefties. When he departed the University of Michigan in 1968 for the University of California, he became an American Federation of Teachers (AFT) activist who articulated some of the founding principles of today's academic labor movement—such as the link between academic freedom and a professor's secure employment. Though an anticommunist, he defended Angela Davis against her dismissal by the university and argued for academic freedom during the years when this principle had high stakes.

When he set out to write *The Radical Liberal*, Kaufman tried to bridge the different worldviews that motivated his work—the New Left vision of participatory democracy represented by SDS and the world of welfare state and coalition politics found in organizations like ADA. Kaufman loved not just activism but the life of the mind—the realm of ideas and philosophical debate. Like C. Wright Mills, whose writings clearly inspired him, Kaufman was a supreme rationalist who believed not only in organizing for change but in justifying why this effort was necessary and legitimate. Reading *The Radical Liberal* is like listening in on the internal dialogue (with both historical figures and contemporaries) of a politically engaged mind.

Kaufman began the book by placing himself squarely within the liberal tradition. More specifically, he set out his own canon that included John Stuart Mill, Leonard Hobhouse, and John Dewey. These were all liberals who had confronted socialists (note the absence of John Locke and Adam Smith from Kaufman's list). He asserted, "The liberal tradition possesses moral and intellectual resources richer than those of any competing tradition." He pointed out that student radicals often relied on the accomplishments and strengths of liberals, something forgotten during the hallucinatory excesses of the late 1960s. He accused radicals of embracing direct action more for its therapeutic benefit than its effectiveness—what he called the "politics of self-indulgence." But he saved his real venom for fellow liberals who had fallen prey to the "politics of pseudo-realism." As Kaufman saw it, liberals needed to rethink their assumptions by reenlivening the *moral* side of their intellectual tradition. Essentially, he offered an *immanent critique* of liberalism by pointing to the "enormous gap between the rhetoric and practice of most American liberals."

The central tenet of Kaufman's liberalism was the right of "each person's equal opportunity to develop his potentialities as fully as possible." He liked to distinguish this principle from entrepreneurial individualism—a key difference in light of debates between communitarians and liberals today (Kaufman's was no egoist philosophy). For him, this sort of developmental and ethical individualism required a political community or a public of fellow citizens. On this point, Kaufman did not go too far beyond the classical formulation found in John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*—the best refutation of "democratic realism" ever penned*—he simply updated it.

Kaufman was best known for his theory of "participatory democracy." He explained to a chronicler of SDS's history that Tom Hayden "got turned onto the idea of a democracy of participation and first started to think seriously about the theoretical dimensions of the topic when he took one of my political philosophy courses" (Hayden credited Kaufman in his autobiography, *Reunion*). Refuting democratic realists, Kaufman argued that participatory democracy was a necessary component of any reconstructed liberalism. As he explained in the early 1960s, "The main justifying function of participation is development of man's essential powers—inducing human dignity and respect, making men responsible by developing their powers of deliberate action." But as the decade heated up, he understood why civil rights activists might question the idea of local community democracy—as the South stood intransigent in the face of political change—and why localities could not solve certain problems without the aid of the

*The belief that citizens were irrational and thus ill-equipped for political participation.

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national government. As he explained in a reassessment of participatory democracy in 1968, the ideal was not enough in and of itself. For instance, it could not provide people with health insurance or the resources necessary to correct previous social injustices.

Therefore, Kaufman believed, liberals needed to hold in tension two distinct political traditions—one that stemmed from James Madison and another from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Yes, we needed a strong federal government capable of administering to a diverse population, and, yes, we needed a constitution that assured stability and protected the rights of minorities. But stability was not the end of political life, Kaufman argued. Conflict, too, was necessary, as was robust citizen participation in public life. Kaufman essentially tried to merge federalism and antifederalism. Drawing from his activist experience, he synthesized participatory democracy and community organizing with the arguments Bayard Rustin made for political coalitions capable of transforming representative institutions. Kaufman explained that "coalition politics without participatory democracy tends to be irresponsible, manipulative, and class dominated" and that "participatory democracy without coalition politics tends to be provincial, factional, and lacking in necessary political and material props, i.e., stability, welfare, and a framework of protected rights."

Of course, talk about disorder versus stability and coalition politics versus participatory democracy reflected the heady debates of Kaufman's own time. They are too easily dismissed because of this. In fact, they hold a living legacy. For Kaufman recognized that social democracy was too statist, top-down, and bureaucratic in its political applications (and too alien to American ideals of self-governance). Clearly, this critique holds a lot of cachet today. At the same time, Kaufman never believed that communities left alone could solve all of their problems. What was needed was a synthesis of these principles—a sort of progressive devolution or partnership between the federal and local levels that balanced participation with justice. The synthesis lives on today, even if not fully articulated. Some Greens in Europe approach it in their talk of community and welfare. And it is the missing piece of the American political spectrum (although Bill Bradley hit on it at times) that would seem to offer an alternative to libertarianism, neo-liberalism, and traditional welfare statism. It is evident throughout American history, in the work of populists at the turn of the century, regionalist visionaries within the New Deal, and the original plans of many Community Action Program leaders during the Great Society. It would seem an ideal worth exploring today in light of the vacuum of progressive ideals.

In Kaufman's own time, his philosophical framework of radical liberalism offered sharp insights into contemporary movements. He essentially foresaw the imminent collapse of the New Left. For instance, he argued that "Black Power" could not be ignored, because it targeted the psychological damage of racism and created participatory communities among the disenfranchised. At the same time, he worried about pseudo-militancy (the brandishing of guns for guns' sake) and criticized the divisiveness of identity politics (the tendency, in his own words, to believe that "nothing matters but color and the 'identity problem' "). He argued that the student radicals' critique of modern universities—what he called "shopping centers for careerists"—was essentially correct. But Kaufman hoped at the same time that students and faculty would not reject the modern university *tout court* but try to make good on its capacity to educate citizens by organizing teach-ins and reaching out to the wider public. In regard to the peace movement, Kaufman pushed for finding policies that could counteract the totalitarian tendencies of Soviet communism while not devolving into militarism.

USING THESE insights, Kaufman articulated his ideal for a future left. It would have to be respectful of liberalism's arguments in favor of representative institutions and individual rights. It would also have to square itself with the major accomplishment of modern liberalism—the welfare state. Kaufman argued that the radical critique of the welfare state's capacity to co-opt (a critique heard in New Left publications like *Studies on the Left*) had something to it. He bemoaned the capacity of elites to "buy off discontent through periph-

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eral remedy of grievances." At the same time, Kaufman celebrated reform by arguing that "enough peripheral movements equal substantial social change." As he saw it, criticism of the welfare state could become "an arrogance, a piece of cultural snobbery that must be criticized and fought by general liberals." He was fearful that the leftist critique of the welfare state could ironically feed into a general push to dismantle it (and on this point, he was right). For Kaufman, the left needed to be content with reform, rather than an overhaul of the system. A left that did this would also have to commit itself to two things at once: the building of a democratic public of engaged citizens from below and an activist state capable of solving problems like social inequities from above.

This was not such a bad vision for 1968. If put into practice, it might have counteracted the zaniness of the New Left and the eventual sclerosis of traditional liberalism. In fact, the combination of participatory democracy with an activist state (and a liberal constitution protecting human freedoms) does not seem like such a bad idea *today*. Nor does the idea that the left should focus on building the processes of citizen debate and deliberation. Or, for that matter, the idea that liberalism is a much more vibrant tradition than most other political philosophies (especially considering the legacy of Mill, Dewey, and Hobhouse). That we are not close to recognizing these things today is obvious. If we ever start to get there, though, we should remember Arnold Kaufman for leading the way. His vision was a creative and bold one that combined the best of the New and Old Left. If we are serious about reviving the left, a good place to start would be to crack open a copy of *The Radical Liberal*. ●

KEVIN MATTSON is author of *Creating a Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy*. He is at work on a book about New Left intellectuals, research for which went into this article.

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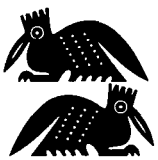

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Beneath the Surface

John Singer Sargent and the Gilded Age

Todd Gitlin

THE VAGARIES of artistic reputation are a recurrent fascination of cultural life. Canons boom but also redeploy. There is a time to gather respect and a time to cast it away. The movements of conventional wisdom up and down, to and fro, are frequently hilarious, sometimes depressing, occasionally thrilling.

For a welcome case of a rising artistic stock, consider John Singer Sargent. He was, no mistake, hugely talented and original, by turns bold and subtle, lavish in praise of beauty but no sentimentalist, witty though not subversive, an aesthete's aesthete, one of the first American painters to gain respect on both sides of the Atlantic. Born in Florence, trained in Paris, and thus not exactly home-grown, he was admired by Henry James and Claude Monet, and can be proudly brandished as our guy among high-status cosmopolitans, an American link between the Salons and the moderns, able to hold his head up with the Impressionists, with whom he was once (misleadingly) linked.

Nationalism, then, might seem to be a crude sociological reason for Sargent's revival as a hot art ticket, a draw for crowds in Washington and Boston recently and then for follow-up shows at New York's Jewish Museum and New York University. Socio-economic climate links our age and his. It should not surprise us that hordes would gather to inspect and mingle with portraits of the wealthy around the turn of the last century in a spirit of awe and conspicuous admiration. As objects of fascination, the rich, after all, we shall always have with us, especially during Gilded Age II. In this light, Sargent might seem the anti-Whitney: In your face, Hans Haacke!

But it would be unwise to leap to the assumption that Sargent is back simply because today's patrons love the material world he painted, or because they are America Firsters, or because they automatically approve of the lives and work of the worthies who could afford Sargent's attentions. Nor does Sargent turn out to be what one expects. Whatever motivates people to turn to his work, they find themselves facing something deeper and more mysterious than the pleasures of beautiful faces, beautiful gowns, and beautiful skin. In front of his peak work, they behold intimations that something exists beyond the material splendor that money can buy. There's a paradox that goes to the heart of Sargent's achievement: he was a connoisseur of material glory who transcended materialism. Sargent tantalizes, as did his friend Henry James in prose, and in one similar way: a sense that what you get is more than what you see. He is, unexpectedly, a spiritual painter, trailing whiffs of transcendence that even the most prosperous art-goers crave.

Sargent was not a great society painter, he was a great painter who painted society—that is, capital-S Society when it was a confident, self-conscious class, radiant with possessions and composure, convinced that its members had been singled out to deserve the best. He became a huge success not for his arresting paintings of street life in Venice—there, he was partial to odd corners and working-class life—but because the wellborn and successful, the arrivistes and the old money alike were in the ageless business of self-flattery. He knew what to offer to the society patrons that Edith Wharton wickedly describes in *The Custom of the Country*: "All they asked of a portrait was that the costume should be sufficiently 'life-like,' and the face not too much so." Sargent knew what his clients were paying for, yet in an age of grandiosity he wanted to do more than flatter. He was in a vastly higher league than Wharton's portraitist but must have faced the

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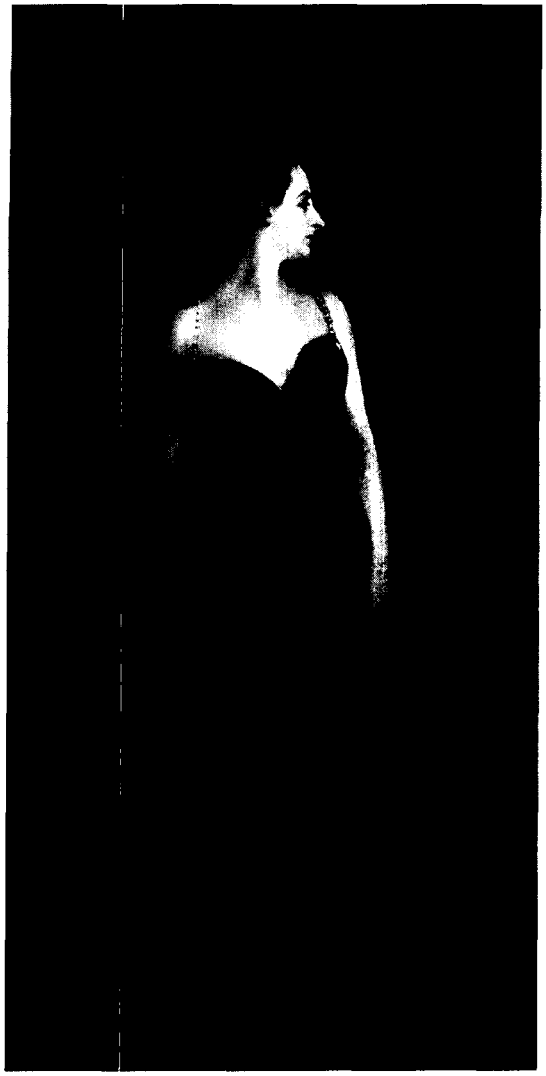

Madame X, 1884, John Singer Sargent, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

same philistine expectations, and his genius was to satisfy those who paid to sit for him—he knew enough to render his women's waists tiny, for example—yet without embalming them. In 1898, a prime year, he painted twenty portraits, cramming in three sittings a day. Yet he tired of the grand manner, and in 1907 slacked off on oil portraits in favor of charcoal sketches he called "mug shots" that required no more than a single sitting. Offered a hundred thousand dollars, at a time when a hundred thousand dollars was a hundred thousand dollars, to paint five Rockefeller family portraits, he placated them with two paintings of the patriarch alone. (These were flattering enough, softening John D.'s face more than photographs do, but—or therefore—they rank among Sargent's least inspired portraits.) Having achieved financial independence, he turned, instead, to murals and landscapes.

Though not of radical inclinations, at least in any political sense, he did know how to outrage. His 1884 portrait of the bare-shouldered Madame Gautreau, or *Madame X*, as he called her, with her low-cut bodice, incandescent skin, and high disdain, was scandalous enough to shock the French, whereupon, at age twenty-seven, Sargent moved to London, settling in James McNeill Whistler's old house, there to make his home for most of the rest of his life. His 1888 portrait of Isabella Stewart Gardner as a sort of wasp-waisted goddess with a stylized halo *(Woman, An Enigma)* apparently irritated her husband (and her?) sufficiently to keep it off display until she died in 1924. But his aesthetic hubris was a youthful phase, and the artifice and intimations of sexuality are not what stand out a century later. In most of his portraits, the excitement is quiet, even formal—odd angles and unexpected cropping, as in Degas. No, the outstanding thing about Sargent was not his capacity to shock. What prevailed, and what continues to prevail, for Sargent is luminosity, a luminosity that goes beyond the sumptuousness of his subjects' possessions. The characteristic light of his portraits, and of many other paintings, is more than skin-deep.

The conventional wisdom on Sargent is that, in the words of Richard Ormond's copy for the beautifully printed catalogue of last year's show (published by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts), he was "concerned with the surface look of things." The estimable Robert Hughes writes in a weak moment that Sargent "was a painter of surfaces." This misses Sargent's power and mystery. The force of his strongest work does not come simply from a gorgeous rendering of appearances. His paintings are streaked with light as if light were an active element, an ether animating the world in unexpected places. The light that strikes the faces of his figures is both within and without them—it is not always clear just where, in the

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painting's terms, the glow comes from. He shares this propensity, and talent, with another great portraitist, Rembrandt, who also hired out to the rich in a gilded time, also ennobled them, and also mingled awareness of their mortality with appreciation of their finery. Hardly anyone else in the two centuries between them had such a fine appreciation for what a beam of light does to a face, a body, clothing, so that the very existence of physical forms seems miraculous. In these transcendent paintings are the visual signs of what T. S. Eliot called "the intersection of the timeless with time."

In middle age, Sargent was not content to unveil the depths behind surfaces. He aspired to public art, and spent much his last quarter century painting murals in the Boston area: for the Public Library, scenes from the history of religion; for the Museum of Fine Arts, classical figures; for Harvard's Widener Library, at the behest of President A. Lawrence Lowell, World War I. But sincere as was Sargent's late-coming commitment to the Big Statement, he could not interpret public symbols in public settings. Some sense of grand duty called him to a realm of public feeling that he didn't know how to paint. Public motives eluded him. When he forsook portraiture, he lost luminosity. In these last decades, his symbolism is forced, cartoonish, propagandistic, many of the figures uncharacteristically flat and awkward. The gas-blinded soldiers he painted for Widener are stiff.

A man finally limited by his Gilded Age and its personal celebrations of wealth, Sargent was not up to war, nationalism, or formal religion. He found energy and nobility in private life on the easel, not public life or allegory on a fresco scale. (On one Widener wall, soldiers look back yearningly toward their families; this is not sacrifice in behalf of republican virtue.) Sargent found grandeur in private persons; when he tried to evoke public values that transcended individuals, what he produced was grandiose. In fact, during his final years, his landscapes—with an eye for the unobtrusive detail and the surprising angle—are vastly superior to the celebrations of righteous Western Civilization that his high-minded institutional patrons wanted to pay for. To portray the ecstasies and agonies of monotheistic—or for that matter, military—experience was beyond him. It is as true in our own Gilded Age as in Sargent's that conspicuous consumption commands more beauty than public expenditure.

RIGHTEOUSNESS was not Sargent's métier; luminosity was. Sociologist Philip Slater once wrote that, far from being materialistic in the strict sense, Americans tend to be indifferent to actual material. They like getting and spending, acquiring things, piling them up, but they also throw them away with aplomb. They don't seem to care that much about the actual texture of the things they crave, hoard, and covet. Sargent loved the material he depicted. He had an aristocratic disdain for the mere surface of surfaces. He wanted to cast a light through the surfaces, to reveal—O, prepostmodern ambition!—their depth. I suspect, without any evidence from focus groups or surveys, that what many viewers find compelling in his paintings is the translucence of surfaces—the way in which the actual loveliness beneath things shines through appearances.

Hence his appeal beyond class envy amid our present-day spiritual groping. Without thick sanctimony or forced "spirituality," but like Whitman and James in their vastly different voices, this profligate lover of the depth of existence was a master of a spiritual affirmation that dares not speak its name. ●

TODD GITLIN, professor of culture, journalism, and sociology at New York University, is the author of *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars*, and most recently, *Sacrifice*, a novel.

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Instead of the Ten Commandments

Erik Anderson Reece

In my home state of Kentucky, basketball is our religion. We all know it and we all agree upon it, at least implicitly. Our catechism begins, "Fight, fight, blue and white." Granted, it's no Song of David, but the steady time signature can keep huge crowds plowing along on the same note.

So last fall, when a grassroots movement began in Corbin, Kentucky to introduce before the state legislature a bill that would require the Ten Commandments to be posted in public buildings, I took it as testament to the fact that basketball season hadn't begun. But all through the winter, the Ten Commandments kept popping up on classroom and courtroom walls in Pulaski, McCreary, and Harlan counties.

The Kentucky General Assembly passed the same bill into law back in 1978, only to have it struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court two years later. But twenty years have passed, and last December a sizable religious contingent took to the steps of the State Capital, rallying again for the public display of the Mosaic Law. When I turned on the news one night, I saw teenagers, wearing what looked like sandwich boards, each embossed with one of the commandments. The young woman who stood closest to the camera held a placard that read, THOU SHALL NOT WORSHIP ANY GRAVEN IMAGES. I wondered what graven images she meant. The stone Buddhas that sit inconspicuously beneath the rhododendron in a few of the gardens around my neighborhood? Surely not. I began to wonder about the word "graven"; it seemed ludicrously archaic. As any critic with an M.A. in cultural studies will tell you, the most persistent graven images in our culture are not graven at all; they are fluorescent and multicolored. They say Tommy Jeans, Abercrombie & Fitch, The Gap—all manufacturers of the clothes that many of the teenagers were certainly wearing beneath their sandwich boards.

The mall is the real American church, the place where we enact our most important cultural rituals. If you don't believe me, consider the experience of a college friend of mine who runs focus groups and crunches numbers for a prominent advertising agency. His employer has given him two years to discover *the Process*—an archetypal mapping of the consumer psyche that will explain our most elemental impulses to *buy*, which can subsequently be transposed into an advertising template for any business, no matter what the product. To help with his research, my friend hired a full-time ethnographer to hang out in malls and study the rituals of consumers as they move from store to store, observing their own secular stations of the cross. And really, think how closely the layout of malls resembles the most famous Gothic cathedrals, with their long naves and double transepts. Was this a conscious decision or is the design of malls driven by something more primal? Either way, we arrive at the same conclusion: *Consumerism* is our religion. We put on its vestments and we pledge our allegiance to that familiar figure that the poet Elaine Equi calls "the patron saint of cash flow."

Yet if the purpose of posting the Ten Commandments is to encourage the larger culture to take them seriously, then we might as well start by reexamining the secular images that distract us from the attention that Yahweh—by all accounts, a selfish god—demands. My own observation has been that most of us are in no hurry to follow the charge of John the Baptist who, standing on the banks of the Jordan, admonished all who owned two Abercrombie and Fitch T-shirts to give one

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away to the poor soul who had none.

As for the latter half of the Ten Commandments, there usually isn't much objection, even from the most strident anti-church quarters. Commandments six, eight, and nine (killing, stealing, perjuring) offer undeniably good advice for anyone who wants to stay out of jail. In my state—and I don't think Kentuckians are unique this way—disregarding the tenth commandment about your neighbor's wife can easily get you killed. And conversely, being faithful to one's spouse (number seven) can prevent a lot of heartache all around. In the words of Pulaski County judge-executive Darrell BeShears, these later proscriptions are just "good rules to live by."

No, it's the first few commandments that ultimately get the attention of the chief justices. In fact, commandment number one presents such a theological and political snare that a serious thinker might never even reach number two. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* has always troubled theologians, seeing as it catches the One God admitting to the existence of other gods. And that, of course, is the real problem. About 15 percent of "other" Americans—"other" being the statistical category to which they are usually relegated—believe in other gods. Or in no gods. Or in goddesses. And therefore, out of respect for every citizen's religious liberty, the First Amendment bars the state from endorsing or enforcing a particular religious point of view. Such is the American Civil Liberties Union's argument whenever it is summoned (in McCreary County, it was contacted by the judge-executive's own cousin) to mount a legal defense for civil liberties.

But personally, I have another problem with the Ten Commandments: they simply aren't very inspiring. After all, when were students or citizens ever stirred to intellectual creativity or self-realization by a list of ten things they should not do?

I propose, therefore, another set of injunctions to be hung publicly as an alternative to the Ten Commandments. This credo is at once inclusively and uniquely American, while at the same time containing what may be the earliest religious impulse. I am speaking of Walt Whitman's poem "Laws for Creations":

Laws for creations,
For strong artists and leaders, for fresh
broods of teachers and
perfect literates for America,
For noble savans and coming musicians.

All must have reference to the ensemble of
the world, and the
compact truth of the world,
There shall be no subject too pronounced—
all works shall
illustrate the divine law of indirections.

What do you suppose creation is?
What do you suppose will satisfy the soul,
except to walk free and
own no superior?
What do you suppose I would intimate to you
in a hundred ways, but
that man or woman is as good as God?
And that there is no God any more divine
than Yourself?
And that is what the oldest and newest myths
finally mean?
And that you or any one must approach
creations through such laws?

THIS POEM has a lot to recommend it. It is not much longer than the Ten Commandments, for one thing. And Whitman's penchant for repetition makes it easy to memorize. More important, it never mentions the word *not*. This is significant, because whereas the Ten Commandments are a teaching that has obviously fallen from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Whitman derives his laws, his *Leaves*, from the other, neglected tree that also stood in the middle of Eden.

From the Tree of Good and Evil, we learned to *judge* the world and to judge each other. We learned to locate God's law in the sky, and to think of this realm as *fallen*, inherently corrupted by our own presence in it. But, Whitman implies, if we turn our attention back to the Tree of Life, we might begin to understand how the natural laws *of this world* are synonymous with the laws of the Creator.

Consider the telling comment that Yahweh makes in the Genesis creation story. After the Primordial Parents have eaten from the forbid-

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den tree, Yahweh tells the angels, in disgust, "Man has become like one of us, he knows good and evil" (Gen 3:22). Given this extraordinary admission, we can answer Martin Heidegger's famous question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" The answer: Yahweh wanted to create a world that would operate outside the knowledge of good and evil. God had grown bored with God's own realm of unchanging, infallible laws. In the middle of a brilliant legal career, Yahweh realized one day that the job of High Judge, Ultimate Arbiter, held no appeal. And so Yahweh abdicated the post, bought a potter's wheel, set it up in the shed around back, and spun out the universe: a work of art. Consequently, the laws of nature bear a strong resemblance to what Whitman called the laws of creation. Art and nature are both governed by the principles of beauty, spontaneity, complementarity, and improvisation. The scent of honeysuckle is the invisible syntax—Whitman's "divine law of indirections"— that draws the hawkmoth to the flower's pistil and stamen. And this syntax binds them together within nature's composition, "the ensemble of the world." Whitman understood the world as a poem, or a song, which is constantly evolving. The composer laid down the original melody line, the major themes, and we have been improvising on that score ever since. We invent new versions of the original poem, and we invent ourselves within the poem.

Because we are at once *characters* and *creators* within the work of art, Whitman saw the same force, the same creative power, stirring within each of us. There is nothing heretical in his claim, "there is no God any more divine than Yourself." Whitman is only calling our attention to how the laws of Yahweh-the-Artist manifest themselves in his creation, and consequently become the law of the heart: "And that is what the oldest and newest myths finally mean." In our oldest religious scriptures, the Vedas of India, we find what may be the earliest and most enduring religious *idea*—that we all carry within our hearts the divine law of the creator:

> As large as the universe outside, even so large is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning, and all the stars. What is in the macrocosm is in this microcosm. (*Chandogya Upanishad*, trans. Prabhavananda and Manchester: Mentor, 1948)

This notion of God as a creative force dwelling within each of us seems to me much more inspiring than the idea of God as a judge, watching us through the surveillance camera known as *guilt*.

Such guilt too often becomes a crippling psychological burden. James Baldwin made it clear in *The Fire Next Time* that we as Americans have not learned to "love our neighbor" because we haven't learned to love *ourselves*. Baldwin traced this problem back to the self-flagellating theology of the Puritans. I think he was right. Racism may simply boil down to this: a projection of one's own self-loathing onto another group of people. "White people in this country will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other," wrote Baldwin, "and when they have achieved this—which will not be tomorrow and may very well be never—the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed." Those who are content within themselves have no need of a scapegoat; they harbor no abiding insecurities that they have to blame on someone else.

POSTING "Laws for Creations" in classrooms and courthouses would be a promising move away from the psychology of guilt and toward the idea of self-creation. What does this mean? It means that we must shed the oppressive expectations of others and home in on the signal that emanates from what Yeats called the "deep heart's core." When I think of Whitman's line, "What do you suppose will satisfy the soul, except to walk free and own no superior?" I think of Bob Marley, Muriel Rukeyser, Martin Luther King, Jr., Edward Abbey, Deborah Meier, Thomas Merton, Muhammad Ali—all free-spirited artists, leaders, and teachers whose daily lives dramatize our escape from the mall and demonstrate how we might invent a culture worthy of the name.

A few months ago, I read Richard Rorty's new book—a manifesto really—*Achieving our Country*. I had just returned from a long hiking trip with Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as my

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field guide and companion. Reading Rorty's argument that, for America to achieve its democratic ideals, we must return to the inspiring writing of Whitman and John Dewey was like reading an improved version of my own thoughts. Rorty's main point is that we must replace our culture of sin and shame with a sense of pride in our country and its potential. Rorty is not unaware of the fact that Americans have reasons—a lot of them—to feel shameful about our past (his title is taken from James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*). But, he believes that to let that historical shame infect the future is a prescription for despair. Without a vision of what our country *could* be, we risk settling for what we have: an oligarchy of the super-rich and the greatest income gap in our history.

To reverse our pessimism about the future, Rorty says, we must begin thinking about democracy as both "civic religion" and "self-creating poem." The final genius of "Laws for Creation," and my last argument for posting it in public, is that it appeals at once to the ancient strand in every religion that believes we still harbor a divine impulse within our hearts and to a secular humanist like Rorty, who accepts no metaphysical religion at all, but believes that democracy is, to quote Dewey, "a metaphysic of the relationship of man and his experience in nature." In other words, democracy is a secular religion that must be enacted *now*, here. Early in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman said he would preach three greatnesses: religion, democracy, and love. It is the commonality of human affection—what Rorty is not afraid to call love, but more often refers to as solidarity—that binds a religion, and must ultimately bind a democracy. No American in this century embodies Whitman's three greatnesses more than Martin Luther King, Jr., who showed us a vision of an American society populated by our better selves.

To bring about such a future—to achieve our country—Rorty suggests that we "mobilize what remains of our pride in being Americans" so we can work toward realizing the ideals of Lincoln and Whitman. It is easy for me to mobilize my own pride when I think of Martin Luther King, Jr., standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, refusing to believe that the "bank of justice is bankrupt," urging all Americans to search its vaults once again for the wealth we have hidden from ourselves. Or when I think not only of Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial but of her monument to the civil rights movement in Montgomery, Alabama—a curving granite wall where a continuous, cleansing sheet of water washes down over a biblical inscription, quoted by King:

> ...until justice rolls down like waters
> and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Or when I think of Edward Abbey, alone in a small skiff on another rushing stream, the cold Colorado River, his wild, free presence an indictment of the dams that will ultimately choke the great river down to a trickle.

Rorty's charge is a good one. And it is in the spirit of imagining a more inspired citizenship that I recommend "Laws for Creations" as the credo of our civic religion, the catalyst for a more soulful, self-reliant, open-hearted America. ●

ERIK ANDERSON REECE is the author of *My Muse Was Supposed to Meet Me Here* and *A Balance of Quinces: The Paintings and Drawings of Guy Davenport.*

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Union Town

David Brody

WORKING-CLASS NEW YORK: LIFE AND LABOR SINCE WORLD WAR II
by Joshua B. Freeman
The New Press, 2000 393 pp $35

I'M SITTING here in sunny California poring over short-term rentals in downtown Manhattan. My wife stops short at a luxury loft on Lespinard Street (a good spot for "sightings" of Robert DeNiro and such, the ad says). Lespinard Street, she says, that's where Sam's place was. Sam is the long-dead husband of my wife's Aunt Lil. After World War II he was a small-time jobber in rented space on Lespinard. Just imagine, my wife says, remembering Sam and his cronies playing pinochle on a slow day, Lespinard Street . . . a hot New York address. Countless New Yorkers and ex-New Yorkers have experienced a similar moment, and every one of them must have framed some kind of theory accounting for his or her version of why DeNiro, and not Sam, now figures on Lespinard Street. But it's actually hard to put one's finger on the crux of New York's transformation.

That's what Freeman does in this engrossing book. He puts his finger on the city's working class. In a general sense, of course, this cannot be news to readers of *Dissent*. Ken Burns's recent series on PBS produced a lot of grumbling for being clueless about labor's role in New York history (not by me: I quit after twenty minutes of skyline shots and breathless commentary). But Freeman's argument is more specific. He contends that New York's character at mid-century was determined by the cultural and political dominance of its working class. The erosion of that power, Freeman suggests, most accounts for the new New York that I read about in the West Coast edition of the *New York Times*.

In making that case, Freeman gets a strong assist from the new labor history. It is, of course, a cliché by now that the new labor history is no longer new. But it is hard to imagine Freeman writing this particular book without a sensibility about class and culture that derives from the great historian of the English working class, E.P. Thompson. When Herbert Gutman became Thompson's American champion some thirty years ago, it seemed as if the main thing was to stop writing trade-union history. What Gutman really meant was that historians should stop writing about unions in the dry institutional terms of the long-dominant Wisconsin school. In fact, unions always figured in Gutmanesque scholarship, for the very good reason that unions were an important—sometimes the only—entry point into a working-class world the new labor historians wanted to explore. Freeman's book is written in that tradition. It is mostly about the New York labor movement but conceived, in the spacious mode of Herbert Gutman, as at once product and shaper of a richly layered urban world.

It has often been said about the new labor history that it never really got out of the nineteenth century, where, by intensive study of local communities, the evidences of working-class life could be uncovered and analyzed. The further one moved into the twentieth century, the harder the enterprise became until, with the advent of national collective bargaining after World War II, it petered out and, insofar as historians write about the recent era, they do so in the older institutional vein. How else are we to describe the relations between General Motors and the United Auto Workers? But New York was different.

> The concentration on consumer nondurables; the crowded industrial districts, with their loft buildings and tiny workshops; the webs of con-

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tractors and subcontractors; and the persistence, at least in some trades, of highly skilled craftsmen working alongside less skilled and more poorly paid operatives—all of which characterized blue-collar New York at the end of World War II—bear an uncanny resemblance to industrial New York a century earlier.

So, as if he were back in that earlier age, Freeman could still aspire to follow E.P. Thompson's example and learn how "New York workers, at many times and in many circumstances, thought and acted in ways that stemmed, at least in part, from their structural position in the economy, with important consequences for them and their city." Freeman's subject is his second advantage: he is writing, as he says, about a non-Fordist city in the age of Ford.

In the final analysis, of course, the credit has to go to Freeman himself. New York is a big subject. It would have been all too easy, prudent, to carve out a manageable part of it (to write, for example, a companion piece to his excellent book on New York transit workers), but then Freeman would have given away his central theme, whose essential requirement is that the city be seen whole. Seeing it whole, however, is no defense for seeing it superficially, or imperfectly. The astonishing thing is Freeman's mastery of the many strands of modern New York history, some of them murky (like the left-right splits of the McCarthy era) or still contested (like the Ocean Hill teachers' strike of 1968) or dauntingly technical (like the fiscal crisis of the 1970s). On all these matters, Freeman offers succinct accounts that are models of expository writing. And finally, what in my book is the biggest danger, he never loses his way amid all the beckoning byroads of his subject. The book is marvelously shaped around the question that Freeman has posed: what happened to New York's working class over the past half century?

THE ANSWER falls naturally in three parts, beginning with an accounting of where labor stood at the opening of the postwar era. Consider the numbers. Of 3.3 million employed New Yorkers in 1946, 2.6 million were wage workers, and of these, roughly half held manual jobs. Manufacturing accounted by far for the largest numbers (970,000 jobs), then port-related work (400,000), construction (144,000), and the remainder in the service sector. New York was not only a blue-collar town, but highly unionized by the end of the war. The paralyzing strike wave that followed it demonstrated labor's muscle and claim to be heard at City Hall. Every mayor from William O'Dwyer in 1946 onward took heed. What was distinctive, however, was not labor's power, which was briefly ascendant everywhere after the war, but the progressive tilt it took in New York. Working people there were mostly renters, Freeman notes, and hence unmoved by fears about property values and taxes that made Detroit auto workers, for example, so easy a target for reactionary politicians. On the positive side, New York's population was heavily immigrant—half Catholic, a quarter Jewish—and ethnic identity intersected with work, neighborhood, unions, and politics to create particularly strong class solidarities. Not least, the left was big in New York. Communists led key unions, controlled the CIO central labor council, and, via the American Labor Party, figured prominently in New York politics.

The upshot was what Freeman calls a social democratic polity, manifested initially by rent control, the nickel subway fare (a dime after 1948), the unrivaled array of health, educational, and cultural services offered by the city, and, in the Quinn-Ives Act (1945), the most advanced anti-discrimination law in the country. Freeman is not shy about New York "exceptionalism." The social democracy it was building, he asserts, "had more in common with postwar European norms than with politics in contemporaneous United States cities."

The second phase of the story, coinciding with Robert F. Wagner Jr.'s long tenure at City Hall from 1954 to 1966, marks the golden age of New York unionism. While nationally organized labor peaked around 1954 and then began its long decline, the New York movement was just entering its best years. Implicit in this disjuncture is a challenge to the current academic orthodoxy that associates labor's loss of dynamism with the purge of communist-dominated unions in the McCarthy years. Why don't we find that effect in New York? Because, Free-

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man suggests, while the anticommunist onslaught was as fierce there as anywhere and left as much wreckage, the people and their ethos remained, resurfacing "in the most likely and unlikely places" and sparking the New York movement long after the shattering of the Communist Party itself. A signal instance was drugstore workers' Local 1199, which left its CIO parent union in 1948 rather than comply with Taft-Hartley, yet a decade later scored the key victory at Montefiore that opened the way for the unionization of the city's low-paid, mostly black and Hispanic hospital workers. Local 1199 would never have succeeded without the massive support of other unions, mobilized in particular by Harry Van Arsdale, the recently installed head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) Central Labor Council. Van Arsdale is a surprising figure, an old-line craft unionist (Electrical Workers, Local 3) who, when the time was ripe, rallied to the vision of a socially progressive, racially inclusive movement. For Freeman, Van Arsdale represents a second, mainstream source of New York's trade-union vitality in the golden age. The third source was the city's public employees, who became strongly unionized during the 1960s and, via the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and District Council 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), emerged as major players in municipal politics. It was indeed in politics that their clout was most conspicuously on display, although, as the liberal Republican mayor John V. Lindsay discovered when he tried to rein them in after 1966, they were entirely capable of taking to the streets to enforce their demands.

Not for a moment, Freeman makes clear, was this time of triumph not shadowed by trouble. Most fundamental were the structural changes eroding labor's blue-collar base. In percentage terms, New York manufacturing had actually been shrinking ever since the Great Depression. In the mid-1950s an absolute decline set in, reducing manufacturing jobs by a quarter by 1970, with no bottom in sight. Much of this decline, especially in the needle and metal trades, stemmed from plant closings, but elsewhere, as on the docks and in press rooms, automation did it. In the meantime union solidarity was being steadily eroded by the migration of better-heeled workers to the outer boroughs. The ironies of winning apply everywhere, of course (including, neoclassical economists might say, to job flight), but there was a special pungency in the fact that a prime conduit into the middle class for New York workers was via the union-sponsored co-op housing that constituted one of the triumphs of the city's social unionism. A second, now forgotten triumph of the postwar years—a community health care system based on union medical centers and prepaid plans like HIP (Health Insurance Plan)—was undercut by the dispersion of union members and their preference for free choice, although the fatal blows were surely struck by organized medicine and the private insurance industry. The New York movement was being overtaken, finally, by a civil rights revolution that it at once welcomed and yet evaded. That the International Ladies Garment Workers Union gave liberally to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People did not compensate for the fact that black and Puerto Rican women filled the organization while Jewish white men ran it; or that, for all Van Arsdale's fine words (and good deeds), the construction crafts remained closed to black workers.

THE ONSET of the third period, when the movement's promise definitely faded, Freeman locates in three discrete events: the Ocean Hill strike of 1968, pitting Albert Shanker's UFT demanding due process for dismissed teachers against African-American parents demanding control over their segregated, failing schools; the attacks by construction workers on antiwar demonstrators on Wall Street in the spring of 1970, epitomizing the backlash that fractured the labor movement and making the hardhat a new symbol of working-class conservatism; and the fiscal crisis of 1975. The first two did not so much test labor's power as the spaciousness of its social vision; the aftermath in fact was a burst of labor militancy brought to a halt only by the economic collapse of 1973. The fiscal crisis, on the other hand, was pre-eminently about power. Indeed, in Freeman's incisive telling, it resembled a coup d'état, with the money men seizing the

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chance to displace the municipal unions as the arbiters of power at City Hall. That didn't quite happen because in the crunch it was union pension funds that rescued the city. But New York's social democratic ethos expired, killed by an unrelenting austerity imposed on its public services and by a new politics of meanness personified by the arrival of Mayor Ed Koch in 1977. The municipal unions, while intact, were now permanently on the defensive. And in the meantime New York's transformation into a gentrified center of global finance and commerce went implacably onward. In 1946, according to an expert cited by Freeman, as many blue-collar as white-collar workers could be found south of 61st Street; no longer. Freeman captures this truth nicely in the puzzled response by New Yorkers to a 1998 demonstration by forty thousand construction workers against nonunion building sites. Did such people still exist?

Freeman's book succeeds splendidly as historical narrative, a bit less so as historical argument. In particular, the relationship between the city's class composition and expiring social democratic ethos is elusive. After all, unionized shop workers were replaced by unionized service workers and public employees. The New York movement actually lost little ground numerically and represents today roughly the same proportion of workers as in its best years. So why did it become incapable of defending the social democratic polity? Freeman has much to say by way of explanation, but not about why, or whether, the fact that New York was no longer a working-class town mattered.

Now that I'm in the complaint department, let me voice my main objection to this book: there is not enough of it. Freeman starts around 1945 and sets his face resolutely forward. But of course working-class New York did not begin in 1945. There is a rich and wonderful history of the previous half century to be told. Freeman has given us Volume Two. What we need now is Volume One. ●

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If We Build One, They Will Come

Eric Alterman

THE PARADOX OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: ELITES, SPECIAL INTERESTS, AND THE BETRAYAL OF PUBLIC TRUST
by John B. Judis
Pantheon, 2000, 305 pp $26

JOHN JUDIS has written a valuable book of the kind that rarely interests commercial publishers anymore. It is an overarching, public-spirited argument aimed at that nearly extinct species known as the "common reader," about the sorry state of our democracy. Although such books are often widely reviewed—and Judis's certainly has been—they need more than just common sense wisdom to justify their existence to the publishing industry. True, an unsuspected "breakout" is always possible, but the sad fact today is that though conservative public policy books can depend on a reasonably sized natural constituency (along with some mass purchasing by like-minded foundations), liberal authors can have no such confidence. While some pundits and politicians of the center-left have amassed sufficient celebrity to engage the mass media to help sell their books for them (Bill Moyers, Robert Reich, E.J. Dionne), they are few and far between. The rest have been victimized by destruction of the "gentleman" cast to the publishing industry as well as the increasing disappearance of the kind

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of reader who might once have been expected to support such enterprises with their time and money.

So the appearance alone of Judis's book is a cause for minor celebration. So too, is its measured, respectful tone. One of the most common weaknesses of leftist screeds these days is that they are pitched in a voice that frequently falls somewhere between whiny and accusatory. The former is one of the unfortunate side effects of the reification of victimization by so many on the left while the latter seems to derive from a sense of embitterment born of marginalization. In either case, it makes it nearly impossible for the writer to do much beyond preaching to the already converted, and therefore reinforces the very isolation from mainstream debate and discussion that caused the isolation in the first place.

Judis's work suffers from neither of these foibles. A former long-time contributor to the democratic socialist publication *In These Times* and currently a regular writer for the *New Republic* and *GQ*, he makes no apologies for his left-of-center assumptions. His argument is itself a pretty simple one. Democracy, he insists, requires disinterested elites to balance the competition between capital and labor, and when necessary, to intervene on the side of one or the other on behalf of social peace, domestic cohesion, and what used to be called "the common good." According to Judis, such elites, which arose in self-organized fashion in the United States during the Progressive Era, and who spearheaded many key reforms, have traditionally been represented by such organizations as the Brookings Institution, the Ford Foundation, the National Civic Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, and so on. But today our elites are letting us down. They have grown selfish and corrupt and have jettisoned their historic task.

Judis writes,

> In the past, the existence of a powerful political establishment could make up for the shortcomings of public institutions and could work to overcome the absence of shared national goals, but there has been a disturbing decline in the quality of the American leadership class—the former public officials, investment bankers, CEOs, and academics who are periodically summoned to lend their wisdom and experience to the government and the country. Former officials who used to provide dispassionate guidance on difficult foreign or domestic policy issues have become lobbyists and consultants for American and foreign businesses. Former Secretaries of State make provocative public statements defending China while not revealing their own financial stake in the current Chinese government. Former senators call for the privatization of Social Security without revealing that they are on the boards of directors of securities firms that would stand to benefit mightily from such a change. Former presidential candidates lobby for businesses that, as politicians, they had denounced only a year before. Bankers, business leaders, and corporate lawyers who, in past generations, might have been driven to devote part of their time to public service and to the greater good confine their public activity to lobbying on behalf of their own firm or industry. And academics and policy intellectuals who brought a spirit of scientific objectivity and disinterest to political deliberations lend their name and expertise to think tanks and policy groups that are dedicated to promoting the narrowest interests of business contributors.

But the problem is more than just self-interested behavior. Falling victim to—or perhaps exploiting the conveniently self-interested arguments of big business and the New Right—the old elites now seek to make a virtue of their own selfishness. The conservatives who came to power with Ronald Reagan and reinforced that victory with their congressional takeover in 1994 rejected the very idea of a dispassionate and disinterested elite that could focus on the national interest. "Instead of creating a new elite," Judis argues, "they undermined what it meant for the country to have one. The new groups, in contrast to the old, did not seek to be above class, party, and ideology. On the contrary, they were openly probusiness and conservative." The old elite establishment did not need a weatherman to know which way the political winds were blowing and they recast their ideologies accordingly. On the one hand, the Reaganite "counter-establishment" attacked the hard-won victories of decades of social progress as so much sappy muddle-

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headedness and protosocialistic sentimentality. On the other, the traditional elites, battered, beaten down and fearful for their future relevance, said, "Maybe you're right." The result turned out to be a massively funded onslaught on the gains of the American welfare state and rights of working people to organize themselves to fight for their own self-interest.

Judis tells a finely nuanced story that speaks to his admirable abilities as an amateur (in the best sense of the word) historian. He makes some fine points, particularly about the larger implications of various intra-elite debates over trade and the power of multinational corporations that I have not seen anywhere else. But one often gets the feeling that he is allowing his thesis to drive evidence with a hand stuck a bit too firmly to the wheel. I am not the first reviewer to discover that Judis's view of the elite organizations he describes is remarkably benign. True, he is using the word "elite" in a slightly confusing, almost tautological fashion. Their very disinterest is what defines them, rather than, say, their income or class position.

For all the histrionic self-identification of so many intellectuals with the "wretched of the earth," fearlessly speaking "truth to power," an intellectual class that serves money and power is the more typical historical arrangement. Brooks Adams was not kidding when he wrote to his friend Oliver Wendell Holmes that "philosophers were hired by the comfortable classes to prove everything is all right."

Judis's decision to credit establishment elites with generally disinterested motives is a crucial one because it drives his model of how social change takes place. He argued in an online discussion of the book published on Slate.com that "the reforms of the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the '60s were made possible by the intercession of the Brookings Institution, the *New York Times*, the Ford Foundation, and similar elite organizations. And I contend that the main reason we haven't had such reforms for the last three decades is that a powerful alliance between conservative Republicans and business lobbyists has blunted popular pressure from below and shunted aside the moderating influence of elite organizations."

But most historians would credit popular organizations and social protest in both the 1930s and 1960s with driving the engine of social reform. The elite organizations were often not merely seeking to negotiate between these organizations and the powers they sought to overthrow, they were attempting to co-opt the leaders of the movements in order to prevent radical change from overwhelming their positions of power and privilege within the system. This was true vis-à-vis the labor organizers of the New Deal, and the pattern repeated itself in a similar fashion during the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s. One can argue that this co-optation had a beneficial effect on the nation's social peace—no small achievement there—but it also may have forestalled important changes that would have made America a more democratic country. In this model, the elites were acting to save their own collective posteriors rather than to smooth the road to social justice. And there was nothing terribly high-minded about it. When the pressure came from the left, as in the thirties and the sixties, it was the elites who did their bidding inside official and semi-official institutions. When it was the right, as in the 1980s, then the elites were just as happy to put themselves in their service. When no one is causing any trouble at all, the elites are happy to run things as they see fit, without any interference from below. The lesson of the latter interpretation would be exactly the opposite of that implied by Judis, for the problem is not the lack of public- and progressive-minded elites, but the lack of a public- and progessive-minded movement. And if we build one, they will come.

The role of the Council on Foreign Relations, for instance, has been to do whatever necessary to keep control of U.S. foreign policy in the hands of the people who have always exercised it. Thirty years ago, that meant choosing William Bundy to edit its flagship publication, *Foreign Affairs*, as if his role as one of the primary architects of the Vietnam War had no implications for the quality of his judgment or worthiness of his values. Today it means attacking with the intent of discrediting any views

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that seek to question the fundamental precepts of what is termed the "Washington consensus" in favor of unfettered free trade and minimal interference with the workings of the market, for moral, political, or environmental reasons.

Judis devotes a great deal of attention to free-trade related debates and his treatment of the "fair trade" position is considerably more sympathetic than anything that would pass for responsible in any publication of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, the *New York Times* editorial page, or any of the institutions described in his study. He attributes the ideological victory of the "free trade" position to the moral and political collapse of the elites that he describes and the power that business money now enjoys in determining the parameters of the debate, noting that "while activity outside Washington has atrophied, activity on or around Washington's K Street has spread and expanded. In 1997, 11,500 lobbyists spent $1.26 billion lobbying Congress—or $2.4 million for each member."

The result of all this money, buying both Congress and its one-time interlocutors, according to Judis, is the collapse of the legislative body's ability to serve the country at large. Hence, no universal health care, no new major environmental initiatives, no changes in one-sided labor law that eats away at the right to organize, no new consumer protection legislation, and so on. Curiously absent from his analysis is much discussion of the role of the media and their increasing ideological coziness with the "comfortable," upon whom we once depended them to afflict. No publication, for instance, was as influential in torpedoing the Clinton health care plan as the once-liberal *New Republic*, which published Elizabeth McCaughey Ross's disgracefully dishonest scare story about the likely effects of the program on its cover and hence provided Republican political operatives and selfish business interests with the excuse they needed to destroy it. The failure of Clinton's health care program dissipated nearly fifty years of political progress toward the consensus goal of universal health care as a right for all of us, rather than a privilege for the well-to-do. There was a time when, in a situation like that one, a magazine with so proud a liberal heritage knew which side it was on.

Still, to point out disagreements with Judis's arguments is not in any way to call into question the value of his having made them. Placing his sympathies openly and honestly on the side of working men and women, he has clearly thought long and hard about a problem that lies at the center of our present conundrum and offered up a thoughtful, nuanced argument about how we might address it. In doing so, he stands inside a proud progressive tradition of political writers and thinkers like John Dewey, Herbert Crowly, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Michael Harrington. Unfortunately, there's a lot more noise out there today, and even with the best of intentions and the clearest of thoughts, it's a lot harder to be heard. If Judis's critique nudges a few of those ex-secretaries to quit selling themselves to the highest bidder and attempt to claim the honorable position in history he has accorded them, his work will more than justify itself. ●

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Holes in the 'New Economy'

Dean Baker

GROWING PROSPERITY:
THE BATTLE FOR GROWTH WITH EQUITY
IN THE 21ST CENTURY
by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison
Century Foundation, 2000 345 pp $25

BARRY BLUESTONE and Bennett Harrison* are two icons that progressive economists of my generation looked to for inspiration. Their 1982 book, *The Deindustrialization of America*, was mandatory reading in graduate school. It was a vivid description of the problems that led many of us to become economists.

This book is a worthy successor to it. Although that book painted a pessimistic picture of the country's near-term prospects, the view presented here is far more optimistic. Bluestone and Harrison are believers in the "new economy." Their new economy is not the grand vision of limitless growth and a 36,000 Dow touted by some of the more exuberant writers in the business press. Rather, it is a more serious perspective that sees the end of the period of productivity slowdown that began in 1973. Bluestone and Harrison believe that computerization and other new technologies have increased the economy's potential output, and that we can now expect to see rates of productivity growth close to those experienced in the golden age from 1947 to 1973. More rapid productivity growth should allow the bulk of the population to sustain significant improvements in living standards.

But *Growing Prosperity* does not take this outcome for granted. The central theme of the book is the contrast between two visions of the economy. The first is the "Wall Street Model." This vision sees the keys to prosperity as low inflation, low interest rates, high saving, flexible labor markets, and free trade. The alternative perspective is the "Main Street Model," which views the main factors supporting growth as investments in infrastructure, research and development, and education and training. In the former view, government plays a limited role in the economy. Its main duty is to balance the budget, or ideally, to run a surplus. The Federal Reserve Board has the responsibility to keep the rate of inflation low, regardless of the cost in unemployment. Trade deals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) play an important role in this model, because competition from imports helps to keep inflation under control. The Wall Street Model is the path currently being pursued by Bill Clinton and Alan Greenspan.

By contrast, the Main Street Model places more emphasis on using federal money for public investment. In the Wall Street Model, unions are an obstruction to flexibility in the labor market; in the Main Street Model they foster productivity growth and increasing worker security. In addition, by allowing workers to secure wage gains, unions ensure that demand keeps pace with output. The minimum wage appears in the same light, providing low-wage workers with more incentive to work and employers with greater incentive to train workers. Bluestone and Harrison also argue for high-performance work systems. They argue that these new forms of work organization, which reduce hierarchy and provide workers with real decision-making power and responsibility, will both increase productivity and improve the quality of work life.

The Wall Street Model, according to Bluestone and Harrison, is ultimately unacceptable because it leads to slow growth and greater inequality. Growth is limited on both the demand

* Tragically, Bennett Harrison died before the publication of this book. His death at an early age is a great loss, not only to his family and friends, but to people working for progressive change everywhere.

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and supply side. The large budget surplus and rising trade deficit, by reducing demand, subtract from growth. That leaves consumers and business investment as the engines of growth. While business investment remains healthy, consumers account for the bulk of demand in the economy. Bluestone and Harrison note the consumption boom of recent years, but they argue that it cannot be sustained, because it is heavily driven by debt. In addition, because the Federal Reserve Board stands ready to step in with higher interest rates at the first sign of inflation, the prospects for future business investment may not be that good either.

On the supply side, the failure of the federal government to invest adequately in infrastructure, research and development, and education and training risks cutting off the basis of the current prosperity. Bluestone and Harrison cite recent research that shows the importance of these forms of public investment to growth. They also point out that government funding has been a major factor in many of the key inventions of recent years, such as the Internet. Without adequate support, the supply of innovations is likely to trail off.

From the standpoint of equity, the Wall Street Model is a complete failure. For example, the main victims of the Federal Reserve Board's anti-inflation policy are low- and moderate-income workers, who live in fear of losing their jobs, even if they don't actually end up unemployed. Similarly, the declining value of the minimum wage hurts millions of the nation's poorest workers. Weaker unions and the threat of low-wage competition in developing nations depress wages for most of the workforce. The big gainers in the Wall Street Model are the professionals and top executives, who don't have to worry about competing with low-wage workers in developing nations.

I agree with 90 percent of the argument in *Growing Prosperity*. Like Bluestone and Harrison, I do not believe that the Wall Street Model can sustain growth. The stock market, using any plausible projection of future profit growth, is hugely over-valued. The world will look very different when it comes back down to earth, with a decline of 50 percent or more. The current trade deficit is also clearly unsustainable. The adjustment here, a 20 percent to 30 percent decline in the dollar, will also create real problems for the Wall Street Model.

Bluestone and Harrison are clearly right that the equity implications of the Wall Street Model are unacceptable. A world with weaker unions and a more insecure workforce is not what we would like to pass onto our children. Although it's true that the last three years have produced broad-based wage gains for most of the workforce, there is little reason to believe that these gains will be sustained.

There are a few issues where I have differences with Bluestone and Harrison. First, I remain skeptical about claims that we have a new economy. It is hard to get a good view of the economic landscape from inside a bubble. The implications of a market correction will be dramatic. On the demand side, a 50 percent decline in stock prices implies a ten trillion dollar loss in wealth. This implies a falloff in consumption expenditures of three hundred to four hundred billion dollars. This cannot be easily replaced by other sources of demand.

THE SUPPLY-SIDE implications may be equally significant. More than 30 percent of firms in a recent Federal Reserve Board Survey reported paying some part of their workforce with stock options. If these stock options prove worthless, it is not clear how workers will respond. Certainly there will be a large impact in the high-tech and Internet sectors, where for many highly skilled workers stock options are the bulk of their compensation. It is not clear how the labor supply decision of a computer engineer will be affected by the realization that her stock options are now worthless. If her base pay was fifty thousand dollars a year, but she thought she was getting hundreds of thousands each year in stock options, will she continue to work for the base salary? Bringing wages in this sector back down to earth may require a long adjustment process.

There is likely to be a whole range of accounting and financial sins that will be exposed in the deflation of the bubble. For example, every organization with a defined benefit pension plan (mostly large industrial corporations, but also unions and many state and local governments), will suddenly have to start making annual contributions, after years of letting appre-

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ciating stock prices take care of their obligations. Many other forms of creative bookkeeping will come to light after a market crash has made them impossible to sustain. Only after the crash will it be possible to determine the extent to which the financial system is crippled.

It is also worth noting that our vaunted budget surplus is not likely to survive the crash. In addition to the impact of the ensuing recession on the budget, current projections assume more than $90 billion a year in revenue from taxes on capital gains. This source of revenue will largely evaporate in the post-crash world. If the current crusade to pay down the debt doesn't stop, in the post-crash world, we are likely to experience a depression.

Even before the crash, the case for a solid upturn in productivity growth isn't entirely compelling. Much of the strong growth of the last four years is simply a recovery from the extraordinarily weak growth earlier in the nineties. For the decade as a whole, productivity growth averaged 0.5 percentage points more than in the eighties, and 0.2 percentage points less than the seventies. There are measurement issues that bring even the strong growth of the last four years into question. There are still grounds for being skeptical about the productivity upturn. We will have to wait to see who turns out to be right on this one.

More important than the debate over productivity is the issue of growth itself. Although Bluestone and Harrison clearly know better (and say so at points in the book), they often speak of economic growth as an end in itself. I can accept that higher productivity growth is better, other things (such as the environment) being equal, but there is no reason that we should value growth that is simply attributable to more labor hours. People in the United States work far more on average than people in any other industrialized nation. If the GDP growth rate fell by one percentage point because people chose to take part or all of the benefits of higher productivity in the form of more vacation and shorter workweeks, there is no reason that we should be troubled by this growth slowdown. This issue frequently arises in discussions of Europe and Japan, in which reporters warn of a dire future because of declining populations. In reality, a declining population may slow overall GDP growth, but can actually lead to more rapid growth in per capita GDP, the real measure of wealth.

One last pet peeve: Bluestone and Harrison have a brief discussion of research and innovation in which they distinguish between a Hewlett-Packard inkjet printer as a private good, because it is subject to patent protection, and a mathematical equation as a public good because anyone can use it. This distinction is peculiar, because it is only the patent that makes one of these private and the other public. If we eliminated Hewlett-Packard's patent, its inkjet printer would be every bit as much a public good as the mathematical equation. In other words, the patented process used to make the Hewlett-Packard inkjet could be copied at no cost in the absence of the government-enforced monopoly provided by patent protection. (Or, alternatively, we can allow patents on mathematical equations.)

The example is less important than the failure to do serious thinking about the appropriateness of current intellectual property laws for the twenty-first century. Patent and copyrights date back to the sixteenth century. Just because they may have been the best way to finance innovation and creative work then does not mean that they still are the best way. Trade economists get extremely upset over tariffs that could raise the price of a twenty-dollar pair of jeans by two dollars. By comparison, patents and copyrights often raise the price of products by several hundred percent or more. For example, prescription drugs often sell for ten or twenty times their cost of production because of patent protection. Recorded music, which could otherwise be available free over the Internet, instead sells for $10 to $15 on CDs because of copyright protections. Standard economic theory shows that the economic costs associated with patent and copyright protection dwarf the costs they attribute to protectionist trade measures. Furthermore, as technology develops, it is becoming extremely difficult to even enforce copyright law in many areas. Since promoting innovation and creative work is clearly important to Bluestone and Harrison, it's worth examining whether there

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are more efficient ways to support this work than the current patent and copyright system.

But these points are quibbles. This book has much to offer. In its attempt to use economics to create a better society it might even motivate another generation of progressive students to become economists. •

DEAN BAKER is the co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research. He is also the author of the *Economic Reporting Review*, a weekly on-line commentary (www.fair.org).

Men Adrift

Cynthia Fuchs Epstein

STIFFED: THE BETRAYAL OF THE AMERICAN MAN
by Susan Faludi
William Morrow & Co., 1999 662 pp. $27.50

ARE AMERICAN men in crisis, entrapped in a consumer culture without the opportunity to pursue meaningful work, and in psychic despair, searching for the emotional and material support of their fathers? In more than six hundred pages documenting numerous case studies, Susan Faludi suggests that they are, and that they fear not only downward mobility but the loss of adequate "fathering" provided to the generation that preceded them. A further "cause" of their plight, she writes, is the emphasis on celebrity in American culture.

Faludi, a Pulitzer-Prize winning author, is best known for *Backlash*, a book that documented the blame heaped on feminism (even by some prominent feminists) for everything from women's bad divorce settlements to poor child care. She now explores the anger and discontent of the baby-boom generation of white and black men whose attempts to achieve the "promise of America" have ended in disappointment and often in despair. Through this book she hopes to make men conscious of their condition and to encourage them to mobilize in ways approximating the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This is a commendable task, but it is doubtful whether men will either accept its premises or identify with the individuals Faludi refers to in making her case.

Scores of men, their wives and partners, friends and kin, and the sharks that have exploited them come alive through Faludi's keen reporting. The men she writes about are presented as prototypes of the generation of baby-boomer men who have experienced layoffs, broken promises of upward mobility, the Vietnam War, meaningless work, and new definitions of "what it means to be a man" in contemporary America. The narratives in Faludi's book are woven through with themes of loss and the substitution of superficial values for the "real" values of meaningful work.

But her choice of stories is an example of the very problem Faludi derides—the focus on celebrity and media attention. Almost every individual and group in the book has been on the front pages of newspapers throughout the country and on prime-time television. Although many of their troubles have been widely experienced, their situations are unique. A number of the men are heroes or "stars," and many live on the fringe of acceptable society. Some sought fame and some were caught up in it, but all were damaged by the manipulations of a bloodthirsty communications industry, which itself "stiffed" men today.

Faludi asserts that many men today feel "shipwrecked" in a service economy, but that this is only the start of their troubles. Victims of downsizing and de-skilling, they no longer play breadwinner roles in their families and develop difficulties in their marriages. In some

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cases wives they once supported now support them or leave them for men with more secure jobs. Many are " searching for their fathers" both symbolically and actually, as models and supporters in a work world where family ties could be useful (consider the case of George W. Bush!). The cases she has chosen range from some disaffected heroes, among them the astronauts of the Apollo 11 mission, downsized managers at McDonnell Douglas Aircraft, and many unsavory but nevertheless sympathetic guys whose fulfillment of manhood seeks expression as "Promise Keepers." The book is also populated with sports fans who call themselves "Dawgs," (a group that tried, and failed , to prevent its beloved Browns football team from leaving Cleveland), gang members of the Los Angeles Crips, actors and producers in the X-rated porn video industry, and cadets at the Citadel, a formerly all-male military academy. The star of *Rambo* films, Sylvester Stallone, is profiled as an example of men searching for meaning in life because he has been forced to play movie roles that he no longer regards as challenging. This is an odd assortment of "representative" American men; but then, the portraits are assembled from a number of Faludi's articles that appeared in such magazines the *New Yorker* and *Esquire*. Stallone and most of the other subjects of Faludi's in-depth interviewing are pictured as enveloped in a media hype culture in which celebrity and consumerism is all and they are the perfect representatives of it.

Faludi moves in and out of psychological, sociological, and economic frameworks to describe the problems of manhood today. She has a lot to say about a society in which men face mass layoffs with minimal social support, the loss of opportunity to practice their crafts and skills, and the knowledge that their fathers usually had achieved more by their age. This sense of loss reaches beyond the work world because, according to Faludi, they cannot be like their fathers and they are losing their roles as women's protectors and supporters because women are entering the job market themselves and becoming independent. Although Faludi points out that women aren't really doing all that well compared to men, they have become the lightning rod for other problems in society that they cannot do anything about. Of course, countless men were absent or uncaring fathers in the past, and blaming women for the ills of society is a pan-cultural and historical phenomenon. Today's men see, for the first time, a situation in which women can claim some independence and have alternative ways of surviving in society other than their dependence on men's bread-winning abilities.

The men in Faludi's book seem to be searching for love wherever they can get it—from fathers, wives, buddies, and bosses. Many of them are not very good at giving love themselves. Some are abusive or unfaithful husbands or neglectful fathers.

Yet there is more at stake. Faludi suggests that the basis for men's sense of *manhood* has become an issue today. She infers that part of the problem they have with women's move toward equality is that their manhood is based on women's dependence. And of even greater importance is that manhood created by *producing* and *doing* has been replaced by an "ornamental masculinity." As Barbara Ehrenreich wrote a decade ago in her book *The Hearts of Men*, Faludi claims the roots of ornamental masculinity go back to the sixties when the *Playboy* magazine philosophy decreed that one could be a man not by doing but by shopping. This produced a "display culture" in which appearance counts more than craft. I think this thesis is questionable. American men continue to define themselves by their occupational roles, which is why, as Faludi points out, the loss of meaningful work is so debilitating.

A recurrent theme in the book is that craft does not count for much anymore. No real analysis of the changing economy is provided. Nor does she write of the men who prosper as a result of technological changes. Indeed, the technological changes of which she writes get mixed in with the cultural changes. This is dramatically illustrated in Faludi's eye-opening account of the Apollo 11 astronauts. Chosen for their skill as test pilots and engineers, the astronauts were reduced to passive passengers on their space craft as NASA Mission Control on Earth programmed their every step through space. These men pleaded to be given some-

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thing to do. Artful media programming established them as heroes, but frustrated that their skills were underutilized, most astronauts left NASA soon after their missions. In the case of Buzz Aldrin, the second man to walk on the moon, the result was clinical depression.

Faludi links the astronauts' accounts with a long excursion into the tragic saga of the Scotts, a black family disrupted by a broken marriage in a community affected by the loss of employment at the Long Beach shipyards. The family fell out of the respectable working class after the father left home and two of the three sons found work only with the Eight-Tray Gangsters, a subset of the infamous Crips who dominated their neighborhood. Kershon and Kody Scott's only inheritance from their father was an arsenal of guns, and the murder Kershon committed with one of them landed him in jail. Kody's not your usual gangsta. Violent behavior also put him in prison, but he wrote a memoir there, *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*, and proved to be a good media figure. "Violence was not about defense or even aggression, but about glamour," according to Faludi. As he told her, "you put in work and you feel needed in a gang"; the promotion of the gang being his main work. "I got these ideas from watching movies and television," he explained. Television and the press also got ideas from him. Every time reporters wanted a Los Angeles gangster quote, they got in touch with Kody Scott, whose star escalated with the L.A. riots of 1992. Faludi refers to Scott's "anguish over paternal abandonment." "My father never passed any knowledge to me." Only the third brother of the trio found an alternative lifestyle, all because of the mentoring of the owner of a nearby grocery market, Morrie Notrica, the son of a Greek immigrant known for his support of the community.

It is quite a jump when Faludi attributes the outrageous behavior of a group of high school students in Lakewood, California, self-styled the Spur Posse, to a failure to achieve dignity through the work their fathers could no longer pass down to them. Instead, the group racked up exploitative sexual encounters. The Spur Posse made the news when police showed up at Lakewood High School and arrested eight members of the group on suspicion of twenty counts of sexual crimes, including rape, unlawful sexual intercourse, and lewd conduct with a ten-year-old girl. It is a testament to American culture that the boys spent only a week in jail and found fame through appearances on television talk shows. Events showed they had the unfailing support of their fathers and mothers.

Similar misogynistic behavior was found among the cadets at the Citadel, a state-supported military academy. Their commanders, their fathers, and indeed, the legislature of South Carolina strove to maintain it as an all-male institution, challenging the discrimination suit of Shannon Faulkner, whose admission threatened to desegregate the school. The Citadel's defense claimed that the bonding of male students accomplished through hazing of all newcomers would be disrupted by the presence of women. The hazing was tantamount to torture of cadets and produced a climate of fear at the school. Faludi learned that some cadets were forced to hang by their fingers from closets and some were stuck with sharp objects in the anus and testicles. According to Faludi, hazing had become more brutal in recent times but was defended by alumni and cadets alike. Her interpretation was that "the level of violence fluctuated with the collapse of male fortunes in a consumer culture and the end of the industrial economy the Citadel has been built to serve." Yet, I learned (as an expert witness in the Citadel case) that most Citadel graduates do not usually go into the military, but get tickets to the professional and managerial community in South Carolina through the network of alumni who see to it that graduates get jobs with their friends and associates. I further learned that in Charleston, an up-and-coming community, an old-boy network sought to maintain its privileges and certainly did not want its traditions (Old South and conservative) disrupted by the integration of blacks at the school (fought unsuccessfully some years back) or women. Here, the legacy of fathers was hardly to be treasured but should be discarded to meet the challenges of a more egalitarian and global society.

The cases Faludi chose to illustrate her points that American men have been "stiffed"

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by a consumer culture and the failure of their fathers provide vivid reading. But they fail to convince the reader that the responses of the men she cites are anything but deviant. Few men seek to redress the problems of establishing manhood by writing about their murderous activities or by performing as porn actors. And how important is the pathos of Sylvester Stallone's unfulfilled wish to play serious dramatic parts?

Faludi ends the book by making a final plea for men to "forge a rebellion commensurate with women's and create a new paradigm for human progress." This is commendable. But without collective consciousness, a quality the men in this book do not have, one wonders where the solutions to basic problems of wealth distribution, employment opportunities, and education can be found. It is doubtful that these structural problems can be solved by establishing "manhood" in traditional ways or by simply "finding fathers." ●

CYNTHIA FUCHS EPSTEIN's latest book (co-authored) is *The Part-Time Paradox: Time Norms, Professional Life, Family and Gender.*

Ritual and Self-Renewal

Phillip M. Richards

CRABCAKES
by James Alan McPherson
Simon & Schuster, 1998 288 pp cloth $23 paper $13

PULITZER-PRIZE winner James Alan McPherson has written two highly regarded collections of short fiction, and the pleasures and insights offered by *Crabcakes* are those of a well-crafted story. This memoir uses the epiphanies and dramatic resolutions of fiction to generate the religious and ethical insight of spiritual autobiography. McPherson traces the psychological path from early alienation to his personal renewal in an intimate circle of friends, a number of whom are deeply influenced by Japanese culture. Gaining entrance into Japanese forms of community and piety, McPherson experiences an acute personal conversion. However, when he makes broad social claims for his personal experience, he puts himself on problematic ground. *Crabcakes* ultimately attempts to illuminate late twentieth-century interracial American life through personal introspection.

The starting place of this plot is the helter-skelter world of McPherson's hometown of Baltimore, a realm of racist police and the decay of a once vital inner-city world. We see this racism in McPherson's encounter with a state trooper who impounds his car as he drives outside the city. We see it again in the memory of McPherson's meeting with a car full of policemen in the city. In Baltimore, the narrator is alternately a victim of racism and an agent of the forces that undermine what he will eventually understand as the communitas offered by Japanese society. His involvement with this world reaches crisis proportions with the death of Channie Washington, an elderly tenant of McPherson's Baltimore property. Preparing to unburden himself of his unprofitable rental house, McPherson begins to confront the issue of community and his relationship to others. Mrs. Washington, who for years included friendly, affirming letters with her rent, is an anticipation of the organic relations that McPherson will find in Japanese culture. As McPherson makes preparations to evict the rental property's other occupant, a Mr. Butler, Washington and her life are dimly but increasingly understood as a humanizing force within an eroding inner-city world. The warmth with which she addresses McPherson in her letters evokes community as does the meal she serves

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him when he returns to Baltimore from Iowa (where he now teaches). Washington, who has selflessly raised an extended family, is described by McPherson as the "Fountainhead . . . that keeps the 'we', the 'us' collected."

One of Baltimore's humanizing features is the consumption of crabcakes near the downtown harbor, where people from all over the city eat the delicacy in groups at stands. At one point McPherson speaks of the crabcake eating as a communion, and the activity as a ceremony that brings Baltimoreans of all ranks together in a regional understanding. However, Channie Washington and the crabcake eating are anticipations of a later sense of community that are not fully understood by McPherson in the early part of his narrative. These early premonitions are a point of departure for the narrator's encounter with the world through the lens of his Japanese experience.

The book's second section invokes McPherson's experience of community from the vantage of insights gained in his Japanese conversion. McPherson's decisive entrance into Japanese life takes place during his second trip to Japan when he establishes an intense friendship with Natsuko Ishii, a friendship that fully overcomes his feelings of alienation as an American black. During a train ride, her simple acts of care for him (she wipes sweat from his face) give McPherson a new, powerfully symbolic sense of selfhood and an appreciation of Japan. McPherson shows us a world of stylized social ritual and community, a world that values the union of formal and natural gestures. McPherson feels most whole as a person when he becomes part of the Japanese flow of "naturalness" in social gatherings such as a meal, a reception, or even having a few drinks in a bar. In the course of his relationships with Ishii and other Japanese, he meets a number of people involved in the worlds of literature, publishing, and business. And in the midst of a broad number of friendships he consolidates his sense of himself as an insider in the communal world of Japanese culture.

Like McPherson's short stories in *Elbow Room*, *Crabcakes* moves from social complications to moments of moral insight. These ethical discoveries are based on the contrast between the alienated world of the West and the organic social world of McPherson's Japan. In McPherson's view, the West represents a society of estranged selves who proffer a variety of masks to each other, avoiding true intimacy. America in particular is described by the author as a world in which a "natural" revelation of oneself is considered naive at best and foolhardy at worst. This alienation is particularly acute among blacks, who must present their own impassive mask toward whites who do not regard them as fully human. Indeed, some of McPherson's most moving and acute meditations on race concern the psychological and emotional dislocations that stem from the estrangement of blacks from the majority population of American society. America emerges—in a series of James Baldwin-like reflections—as a world in which the black and white populations can never truly know each other. McPherson himself participates in these dislocations in the decaying world of Baltimore, and they come into full focus during his trip to Japan.

On the other hand, the world of Japan is one in which true intimacy—the kind of intimacy that Channie Washington sought—is realized in the various forms and gestures of social life. This ritualized intimacy occurs at dinners, in visits to sacred places, in the celebration of a friend's day of death, and in the use of ceremonial gifts as tokens for greeting. The community in Japan is one of highly tuned sympathies, regulated by social rituals, and defined by well-wrought understandings. McPherson not only commits himself to this vision of organic community shared with his small circle of Japanese and American friends but presents this vision as an exemplary one for his readers.

McPherson's gradual and increasingly complicated entrance into this world—and his importation of its values to America—create the book's dramatic structure. Through a series of complications, McPherson arrives at the central moral vision of community. This literary dynamic generates the book's chief ethical insight. In contrast to the vacuity of an estranged American culture of masks, the "natural" intimacy of Japanese community makes possible a broad human vision spanning the extremes of joy and tragedy.

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The book's climax takes place as McPherson portrays the contradictions of this broad Japanese vision. In the spirit of Japanese intimacy, McPherson involves himself in the familial catastrophe of a neighbor, Howard Morton, who is losing a son to cancer. Visiting with Morton in a moment of crisis, McPherson keeps a pair of visiting Japanese friends waiting by themselves in a restaurant for three hours in what for him is an unpardonable offense. He therefore violates the trust and intimacy of one relationship in order to sustain another. This violation raises the central question of the book's final section: how does one choose between allegiances to intimate friends?

Here, McPherson sacrifices the ceremonial gesture of the dinner for one of communal sympathy. In this case, the "natural" and "formal" social understandings of the Japanese world come into sharp, tragic conflict. And this conflict is intense because McPherson has structured his sense of his relationship between himself and others upon Japanese values of community. McPherson's entrance into the Japanese ethos involves his acceptance of a tragic element that he learns to accept as the cost of intimacy.

McPherson's book projects a self-consciously literary vision of society and of the author's status. In many ways it is an orientalist travel book to an exotic East of Asian virtues. *Crabcakes*' meditations on race echo the early essays of James Baldwin. And the nearly surreal account of the reptilian state trooper who impounds his car invokes the postmodern mode of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The book's telling moments of self-consciousness, moreover, alert us to the special conditions that surround McPherson's entrance into Japanese society. After an arranged lecture in which McPherson expounds his views of Japanese culture, a young Japanese woman tells him that he does not understand her country. The possibility of a skewed vision is easy to understand. McPherson is introduced to Japanese society by people who already admire him and desire further contact with him. Although he is a cultural outsider, McPherson is a highly successful American author, who mingles easily with the literary and publishing elites of Japan.

McPherson maintains a strident sense of a pervasive American racism, even though he moves in a racially integrated social world. He has taught at prestigious universities and numbers distinguished members of the academy among his friends. The world of his academic Iowan neighborhood is by his own description a decidedly multicultural one. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of a person such as McPherson outside of the newly democratized and integrated world of the American university. The problematic nature of McPherson's assumptions is complicated by the sparseness of the narrative on matters of real importance in understanding the nature of McPherson's experience. There is little mention of an immediate group of American family and friends around McPherson. Aside from an extended account of his Japanese friendships, we do not learn much of the author's life itself during this period. And it is ultimately difficult to tell the extent to which his portrait of himself and his country represents the dislocation of black American life or personal idiosyncrasy.

Despite the book's emphasis on McPherson's conversion to a Japanese communitas, *Crabcakes* remains a curiously self-centered work. This book is peculiarly focused upon McPherson's response to a few elements in the world around him. His encounters with his Japanese friends concern their impact upon his particular predicament as an alienated black American. His accounts of the Japanese are particularly devoid of the tensions of individual personalities, the complexities of the other selves. He seeks to read himself and his own personal transformation within the uniquely Japanese vision of community. That is, McPherson seeks the same therapeutic relationship with ritualized community that an earlier generation of Americans sought with nature. Indeed, this book is a deeply religious attempt to come to grips with a self-centered alienation.

McPherson's highly personalized version of the race problem largely ignores the larger social and historical context in which his experience takes place. This context, which is the recently opened world of elite American life, is now available to people of extraordinary talent such as McPherson. The author's crises are the natural concomitant of black mobility in

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this sphere of privilege. In *Hue and Cry* as well as in *Elbow Room*, McPherson acutely observed the transformation of a transitory segregated world in a set of remarkable stories. McPherson is part of a cohort of black intellectuals and professionals confronted with the white world from the peculiar vantage of integrated life, social and political realities to which he only vaguely alludes. In one sense, the book's ideal of a Japanese-influenced organic community is an exotic, romanticized therapy for a black middle-class angst.

McPherson's resolution to his angst is furthermore typically American. He presents himself in a highly idiosyncratic and individualistic way, but his very individualism makes him a recognizable phenomenon. He is an American traveler who carries what the Emerson of "Self-Reliance" calls the "giant of self" abroad. Indeed, the authority of this book's narrative voice emerges from its participation in a larger American tradition of individual self-renewal. Despite important differences between McPherson and a figure such as Walt Whitman, the author of *Crabcakes* also seeks to transcend the pressures of a culturally limited American self.

However, McPherson's focus on psychological and emotional details of personal transformation has blinders. For all of his precise introspection, this book lacks a larger sense of McPherson's place in a changing racial world where others share his plight. He cannot relate his own personal dislocations to a broader experience of dislocation. Acutely attentive to the dynamics of personal renewal, this book is somewhat oblivious to the history in which that life is to be renewed. McPherson's vision represents a deeply American optimism and naïveté. ●

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Having Their Say

William Kornblum

WHAT WORKERS WANT
by Richard B. Freeman and Joel Rogers
Cornell University ILR Press; New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999 226 pp $17.95

WHAT WORKERS WANT is a sharply focused study of how American workers think about workplace participation. Its authors, Harvard economist Richard Freeman and University of Wisconsin sociologist Joel Rogers, began releasing results of the survey on which the book is based in 1995. Reports in the press at the time wrongly characterized the study's results as unfavorable to organized labor. The new book presents the survey's findings with engaging analysis and unfailing clarity and in the main the news is quite favorable for the labor movement. It does, however, offer much to mull over for trade unionists and their allies.

Richard Freeman was a member, in the first Clinton administration, of the ill-fated Dunlop Commission on the Future of Labor-Management Relations. Dissatisfied with the absence of workers' voices during the insiders' deliberations, he and others convinced the management-oriented Sloan Foundation to "undertake as objective and scientific a survey as we could of worker views toward how workplaces operated and how their workplaces might be improved." The result is the most ambitious study of workplace democracy in the past generation. It includes a national survey of more than two thousand workers, extensive focus groups with workers, and a variety of in-depth discussions of specific workplace issues. As with all sur-

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vey research, one would wish for a far larger sample to permit many more subgroups of workers to reliably speak their mind (minority group members, women and men, workers in different industries, and so on). But in an era of intensive use of opinion polls, this one is a model of careful questioning and even-handed analysis.

Here is how Freeman and Rogers sum up their study: "Our central finding in *What Workers Want* is that, given a choice, workers want 'more'—more say in the workplace decisions that affect their lives, more employee involvement at their firms, more legal protection at the workplace, and more union representation. Most workers reported that existing institutions—from unions to EI (employee involvement) committees to government regulations—are either insufficiently available to them or do not go far enough to provide the workplace voice they want." More than anything, the authors find, workers want their voices to be heard. They desire a greater role in the workplace but doubt management's willingness to share power. They have strong ideas about how their genuine involvement could improve not just their private lot but also their companies' fortunes.

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For union leaders and their allies the news about workers' desire for cooperative representation on the job is more ambiguous. For example, 73 percent of all workers surveyed felt that a workplace organization that represents their interests can only be effective if management cooperates. Seventy-five percent of the union members in the sample agreed. Worse still, about two-thirds of union members said they would prefer a weaker form of workplace cooperation approved by management over a more powerful form opposed by management.

Do these findings point to a pervasive timidity among American workers? Are workers so cowed by their employers that they fear conflict more than they want power or even a say in the workplace? Or perhaps the results would have been different if the Worker Representation and Participation Survey (WRPS), as it was called, focused on the public sector, where union membership is still rising. The Freeman and Rogers research reports on workers in the private sector. Only 10 percent of American workers are in the public sector, and it was too costly to include them in the initial sampling plans. Fortunately, Freeman and Rogers did get to address the question in a later survey of public sector workers. They found only very modest differences between public and private sector workers in the United States. And to check whether American workers are indeed more timid on these issues than their counterparts elsewhere in the world, they conducted a comparable survey in Canada, the largest survey of workers in that nation's history. They also encouraged similar surveys in Great Britain and elsewhere. Although this book does not go into comparative detail, the authors note that there were no significant differences between private sector workers in Canada or the United States, but that "British workers seem less cooperative and more aggressive in their attitudes toward management than either Americans or Canadians."

"Perhaps we should not have been so surprised at worker sensitivity to management at-

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titudes at the workplace," Freeman and Rogers admit. "If you are in a room with a 900-pound gorilla, better that it be good-natured and friendly than hungry and angry." But they remind us that "workers did not choose an organization run by management; they chose an organization run jointly by management and labor," and that their strong preferences are for worker representation by independent election.

Workers' preferences, for independently elected worker representatives, for example, are essentially pro-union. Indeed, 32 percent of nonunion respondents said they would choose a union at their workplace if a vote were held tomorrow. And perhaps more of their fear of confrontation would vanish if unions could get a fair chance to make their case at the workplaces. The carefully measured Dunlop Commission report made a plea for fairer rules governing union representation elections and more assurance of contracts to follow union victories. But there is scant evidence in the research to suggest any change of heart in the ranks of capital.

Behind the obsessively neutral language of survey research is the expression of old-fashioned class interests. About 75 percent of management respondents said they strongly prefer to deal with workers as individuals rather than in groups. The vast majority of them also admitted it would hurt their careers "a great deal" if their workers decided to form a union. Throughout the book, managers are found to support cooperation in the workplace when it does not mean giving up any power whatsoever. Workers, in contrast, are willing to support many different types of workplace initiatives at cooperation.

Of course there is unlikely to be any kind of shift toward greater workplace democracy in the current political environment. Freeman and Rogers document the wide gap between workers' desire for meaningful power and their actual participation in workplace decisions. They write persuasively about the higher productivity and other business opportunities more worker participation on the job would yield. But the Dunlop Commission's mild recommendations in this direction were immediately bashed by the triumphant Republican congressional majority after 1994. The unspoken lesson of the research, for this reader at least, is that despite their relative weakness, unions remain workers' best bet to win power and gain meaningful forms of cooperation in the workplace. The authors' fine chapter on how workers judge government regulations only reinforces this point.

Would more government regulation in areas of worker rights, safety, and antidiscrimination answer the desire for greater say at the workplace? The evidence in the Freeman and Rogers survey is that it would not. Government agencies are not the route toward greater say on the job, even if legislation might be necessary for its eventual achievement. Six percent of the respondents said they had taken their grievances before a governmental agency. Another 17 percent said they knew a colleague who had done so. But a high proportion were dissatisfied with their experience. Aside from the law's delay and related frustrations, part of the problem is that the majority of workers believe they have rights on the job that they simply do not possess. Eighty three percent believed, for example, that it was illegal for the boss to fire them for no reason or for refusing an assignment to hazardous work. These results point again to the great unfilled need for progress in worker rights on the job. Notably, the workers surveyed flatly rejected such favorite management strategies as mandatory arbitration with company-appointed referees. They embrace the idea of binding arbitration but only if they have full say, through their elected representatives, in choosing the arbitrator.

Once again, these survey results offer strong support for what unions traditionally stand for. But do unions actually stand for greater say for workers on the job? Most workers interviewed did not see their unions as involved enough in the daily round of workplace decisions. And a central lesson of the study is that workers want more say in every aspect of their work lives, including their unions. This is a message about workplace democracy that union leaders would do well to build into their organizing strategies. ●

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The Seussian Left

Michael Kazin

Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel
ed. Richard H. Minear
Introduction by Art Spiegelman
The New Press, 1999 272 pp $25

Somehow, all the hypsters who compiled end-of-century, best-of-the-millennium lists neglected one vital topic: greatest figures on the American left. One is thus obliged, even after the celebrations have ended, to pose a question to the historically astute readers of this journal: which men and women best advanced our ideals, leading movements or producing intellectual work whose influence persists in U.S. politics and culture today? My own list would include Martin Luther King, Jr., Frederick Douglass, Emma Goldman, César Chávez, John Dewey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Michael Harrington, and Betty Friedan.

Yet for broad and continuing appeal among both young and old, one individual stands apart: Dr. Seuss. From the early 1950s through the 1980s, in books that sold millions of copies, Seuss (Theodor Geisel) used witty rhymes and fluid, unpredictable drawings to convey the best principles and some of the fondest aspirations of the democratic left: racial equality and integration (*The Sneetches*), workers' control (*Yertle the Turtle*), protection of nature from corporate greed (*The Lorax*), nuclear disarmament (*The Butter Battle Book*), and encouragement of men who nurture the young (*Horton Hatches a Who*). His most famous book, *The Cat in the Hat*, broke joyfully with the moralistic conventions of literature for beginning readers. That one hip, sublimely destructive feline may have done as much to inspire the counter culture of the 1960s as the Beats, Little Richard, Elvis Presley, Marlon Brando, and James Dean. And, of course, Seuss's work still graces elementary schools and homes throughout the land.

I realize that more than a few *Dissent* readers will bridle at the thought that a children's author, particularly one whose books have long been staples of the commercial canon, should be ranked alongside or even ahead of men and women who devoted their lives to building great social movements. Many of Seuss's books, particularly those meant for preschoolers, are full of lovely nonsense with no discernible moral point. His political sympathies notwithstanding, Seuss, who lived to the age of eighty-seven, never appears to have joined a left organization or performed a political act more daring than denouncing billboards, thereby giving up a lucrative national contract for designing same.

But we should have learned long ago that good politics gets nowhere in a hostile culture. And Seuss did more than any artist and writer of his time to challenge the cruel pieties of cold-war America and to make defying them seem possible, necessary, and droll. As E. J. Kahn wrote in the *New Yorker* forty years ago, "In his [Seuss's] books, might never makes right, the meek inherit the earth, and pride frequently goeth before a fall, usually a pratfall." The untouchable legitimacy and sheer market power that Seuss had achieved by the late fifties gave him entrée to homes and schools that were all but barred to left authors who wrote mainly for adults. If it weren't for the impossibility of translating such Seussian names as Ham-ikka-Schnim-ikka-Schnam-ikka-Schnopps, his literary tendrils might have ensnared masses of children and parents in other lands too.

Of course, if grownups deemed Seuss a "serious" artist, there would, almost a decade af-

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ter his death, be scores of studies exploring his influences and his motives, and debating the fit between his technique and his ideology. As it is, the only book-length treatment of the man, Judith and Neil Morgan's *Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel*, seldom rises beyond the kind of genial details found in biographies of celebrities by uninquisitive journalists who also happen to be fans. For the Morgans, Seuss is little more than a gifted cartoonist with a talent for creating zany rhymes. The roots of his politics remain all but unexplored.

THAT MAKES *Dr. Seuss Goes to War*, edited with great care by historian Richard H. Minear and zestfully introduced by Art Spiegelman, particularly welcome. From January 1941 to January 1943, the artist contributed hundreds of cartoons to New York City's *PM*, perhaps the most left-wing daily newspaper ever published in the United States outside of the newspapers issued by radical parties themselves. In those years, *PM* sold upward of 150,000 copies every afternoon to readers who usually shared its militantly pro-labor, antiracist, and antifascist views and enjoyed the free-swinging reportage and commentary of writers like I. F. Stone, Lillian Hellman, James Thurber, and Heywood Hale Broun. *PM*'s oft-quoted motto, "We are against people who push other people around," may seem naive or even mendacious when one considers how gently the paper treated Stalin and his domestic disciples. But it certainly matched the views of its prolific editorial cartoonist.

Seuss burst upon the pages of *PM* with a flurry of attacks on Charles Lindbergh, Gerald Nye, Father Charles Coughlin, and other "isolationists" who saw no reason to be alarmed by Germany's conquests in Europe. Through most of 1941, he depicted America Firsters as a bevy of ostriches, their faces locked in dreamy grins. One cartoon from April of that year shows a member of the species selling "ostrich bonnets" to new clients, while behind him, a long row of customers snooze with heads lodged firmly in the soil. After Pearl Harbor was bombed, the ostrich gave Seuss a striking way to register the sea change in public opinion: an explosion labeled "War" wipes that grin off the bird's face and hurls his smoke-blackened body into the sky.

With rare exceptions, Seuss skewered the America First crowd with pinpoint irony instead of thrusts to the jugular. In his drawings, one (human) isolationist happily bathes with swastika-laden alligators and sharks; another twiddles his thumbs on a tree branch while a savage woodpecker resembling Hitler topples boughs labeled "France," "Norway," "England," and so on; while a third blithely hands out lollipops to enormous Nazi sea dragons. The artist clearly despised Lindbergh for suggesting that intervention was a Jewish plot and for offering Hitler his fawning praise. Yet Seuss never distorted Lindbergh's features or showed him doing anything more vicious than shoveling garbage and dead cats from an "Anti-Semite stink wagon."

This mode of attack may seem, in retrospect, too gentle (although, as Spiegelman notes, few other dailies at the time criticized Lindbergh's racial views). But it fit Seuss's temperament and presaged the type of anthropomorphic scoundrels who would play central roles in his postwar books for children. Imperious Yertle and selfish Maisie (who flies off on a long vacation, leaving Horton the elephant to incubate her egg) are, like the ostriches in *PM*, blithely unaware of the pain they inflict. They are moral idiots, unworthy of the tribute that hatred pays to the objects of its passion.

Jaunty ridicule was, however, not so well suited to portrayals of the enemy abroad. Seuss's Hitler is usually an arrogant, smirking figure—confident of future triumph. Although the Nazi tyrant was indeed riding high through most of 1941 and 1942, Seuss seemed mystified by his charisma. Even when, in one *PM* cartoon, the Führer stands amid a grove of trees festooned with Jews he has lynched, he is singing a gleeful ditty (accompanied by Vichy prime minister Pierre Laval). This is closer to Charlie Chaplin's portrayal of a vainglorious Hitler in *The Great Dictator*, filmed just before the invasion of Poland in 1939, than it is to the paranoid mass murderer the United States was arming itself to fight.

When depicting the foe in the Pacific, Seuss had no well-known individual to shower with scorn. So, in accord with the views of most other white Americans, he depicted the Japa-

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nese as a treacherous horde of ever-smiling, near-sighted, small-statured villains. Still, Seuss's essential humanity did manage to flicker through the racial stereotype. Unlike other U.S. cartoonists (described in John Dower's splendid book *War Without Mercy*), he almost never stooped to drawing a Japanese in bestial form; for Seuss, "Japan" was most often a mischievous boy in need of firm discipline. His cartoon for December 9, 1941, shows a group of miniature Japanese soldiers awakening Uncle Sam, a long-billed eagle, from his isolationist nap. One bangs the eagle with a mallet, another pings him with a slingshot, a third drills him from behind. The antic marauders leap forward to Thing One and Thing Two in *The Cat in the Hat*, rather than backward to the relentless Yellow Peril.

The most memorable cartoons in the collection concern the war at home. In January 1942, Seuss drew a series of satirical "War Monuments" that memorialized characters like "Dame Rumour" (two women chatting from marble windowsills), "John F. Hindsight . . . Master Strategist of Yesterday's Battles" (whose telescope curves backwards), and "Walter Weeper," a figure who creates a fountain with his copious tears while "others . . . furnish the blood and the sweat." This was morale building with an edge but absent of rancor. Later that year, Seuss attacked racism in war industries by showing prospective black workers entering a maze that never quite reached a factory's gate. And, to dramatize the malevolent might of reactionary southerners in Congress, he drew a top-hatted figure, labeled "poll tax bloc," who rides atop a massive, gloriously ugly creature that's a hybrid of camel, dog, horse, and vulture.

Seuss's bumptious, wide-eyed figures, whether human or animal, who swing between smugness and perplexity, are a far cry from the steely warriors who dominated recruiting posters in the United States and other nations. His cartoons complemented both the militant good cheer of Franklin Roosevelt and the self-mockery of American GIs. They seem to argue that winning the war meant expressing the best instincts in the national psyche and laughing down the worst ones. In *PM*, Seuss depicted Uncle Sam, the tattered eagle, in a variety of moods unhelpful to the war effort: apathetic, puzzled, cowardly, ignorant. But the national bird (which Art Spiegelman guesses was modeled after "the prominently beaked Theodor Geisel himself") always appears capable of snapping out of it and driving the nasties back to the hell from which they came. And, in the end, of course, he did.

Seuss gave up editorial cartooning in 1943. Yet he kept inventively elaborating his left-wing populist faith: humble the rich and haughty, treat Americans as equals who share most of the same problems and desires, and fight to defend democratic principles. In effect, the good doctor took what was best about the Popular Front (ignoring its communist provenance and abandoning the racist images from the war against Japan) and translated it into some of the wittiest, most popular narratives ever created for children. Criticizing left-wing artists in Hollywood, producer Samuel Goldwyn once famously quipped, "If you want to send a message, use Western Union." He obviously wasn't reading Dr. Seuss. ●

MICHAEL KAZIN's most recent book (co-authored with Maurice Isserman) is *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*. He teaches history at Georgetown University.

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WTO 101

Editor:

I was disappointed by Jackie Smith and Timothy Moran's article ("WTO 101, Myths about the World Trade Organization," Spring 2000). The piece fails the simplest test of internal coherence. The authors argue that industrialized countries use the WTO to protect their interests to the detriment of poorer countries, citing specifically the fact that in the Uruguay round tariffs for industrial goods were cut far more deeply than those for agricultural products. Given this situation, the logical response for an advocate of third world agricultural societies would be to call for lower agricultural tariffs. In fact, this was a major component of the agenda for the Seattle talks. Yet, clearly Smith and Moran would not advocate any such thing. Instead, they go on to contradict their earlier line of argumentation by attacking Michael Moore's assertion that "the longer we delay launching the [next round of] negotiations, the more the poorest among us lose."

The impression one gets is that the authors are more interesting in venting a diffuse dissatisfaction with the world economic elite than in grappling realistically with the problems of the world's poor. Consider, for instance, the proposal recently put forth by the Clinton administration to radically open American markets to third world producers. While the proposal would clearly benefit the poorest countries greatly, it received no support from the left because it doesn't fit neatly into its ideological vision of what the poor world needs. No self-respecting leftist seems willing to endorse a program that relies on co-operating with those odious armies of trade bureaucrats and neo-liberal capitalists. We simply will not entertain the possibility that such people might do something—anything—that in any way benefits the world's poor. The question may fairly be asked, then, whether the standard left-wing critique of globalization isn't ultimately animated more by a pre-rational revulsion toward first world elites than by concern for the well-being of the world's poorest people.

Constitutionally unable to see elite proposals in anything but conspiratorial terms, WTO critics have retreated to a position of constant naysaying, straining to resist the overwhelming tide of economic liberalization while advocating no coherent alternative program of their own. I find it telling that, in refuting Myth #6 ("There is no alternative"), the authors argue that globalization is reversible rather than inevitable without ever sketching even the broadest outlines of what may replace it. Far clearer on what they are against than what they are for, they offer the poor countries nothing but abstract solidarity and the rock-solid conviction that capitalism sucks.

Francisco Toro
Caracas, Venezuela

Jackie Smith and Timothy Patrick Moran Reply

It sounds to us as though Francisco Toro is dishing out a few doctrinaire litanies of his own! Our essay sought precisely to move the debate about global trade beyond the taken-for-granted claims on behalf of the WTO and to consider them in the light of systematic, scholarly evidence. Toro wants to dismiss our argument—and the mounting evidence that supports it—as pure ideology. However, our empirically driven assessment revealed a multilateral trading system that is based on questionable assumptions uncritically accepted as fact by decision makers and mainstream media.

Toro cannot accept the idea that trade liberalization might not benefit poor people. He makes the unsubstantiated assertion that the Clinton proposal "would clearly benefit the poorest countries greatly." But our reading of the evidence is that more liberalized markets and more international trade have been accompanied more often than not by increased poverty and little or no sustained economic growth in the global South.

Vanguards and Coalitions

Editors:

In separate pieces in the Arguments section ("A Place for Rage," Spring 2000), Rachel Neumann and David Glenn discussed what conditions were required for property destruction (such as that which occurred here during the World Trade Organization [WTO] festivities) to be a valid part of the broader movement against the global corporate takeover. Although they differed somewhat about what was required to legitimate the trashing of buildings and other property presumably owned by the "enemy," they did not examine whether such activity was itself at issue. I think it should be.

During the several days of demonstrations here, the comment I heard most often made about the "anarchists" who vandalized Nike, Starbucks, and so on, was, "I'd like

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to kick their asses." I heard no one speak a word of approval or support for the self-elected vanguard who carried out the exemplary actions in downtown, shielded from the police by the bodies of the rest of us.

Now, assuming that there really is a coalition afoot, one that appears to hold the promise of a truly historic breakthrough between organized labor and the activist constituencies familiar to us all, do Neumann and Glenn really believe that the Teamsters, Steelworkers, AFSCME, AFT, and others are likely to be favorably disposed to the petty destruction of businesses by the "free"? Should our labor sisters and brothers take up the hammer in acts of liberatory destruction?

I hope that the ludicrousness of such a suggestion is immediately obvious. Judging from the exchange between Neumann and Glenn, I am not certain that they would get the joke. Granted, for a coalition to be viable, an important degree of compromise and mutual listening needs to occur—what I challenge is the direction that this needs to take. I suggest that listening—and moving—in more democratic, lawful, and nonviolent directions accurately sketches the most fruitful direction for the emerging coalition to take.

On May Day, a police officer in London was hit in the face with a brick by self-appointed destroyers of capital; it is only a matter of time before "our" vanguard inflicts fatalities. Rather than seriously pursue this alliance with demolition and assault, I suggest a strong dose of self-examination and humility might be in order. It is precisely at this moment that I think we are most missing the voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. It is up to us to do the work—of justice with healing—that he undertook with his life. We could do worse.

DANIEL RAPHAEL
Seattle, Washington

Rachel Neumann Replies

Since Daniel Raphael seems to pine for the voice of Martin Luther King, Jr., I quote it briefly here: "The only real revolutionary, people say, is [one] who has nothing to lose. There are millions of people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life."

It is this "unsettling force" that seems to discomfort Raphael. Once you stir things up, he worries, you unleash a mob of hammer-wielding teamsters and who knows what else. Perhaps what really unsettles him is that he—and other good liberals like him—may be forced out of complacency. As I stated in my earlier argument, I think this discomfort is not only useful, but necessary.

Raphael seems to think breaking windows of multinational corporations with a history of human rights violations is wrong, but wanting to "kick [the] asses" of those who do is a reasonable reaction. He doesn't seem bothered by the real and vicious violence of the police in Seattle or the D.C. police and U.S. Marshals in Washington who—when faced with *nonviolent* protesters—broke arms, beat people up, and sent more than six peaceful protesters to the hospital. Protesters made a strategic choice not to break windows or damage property in D.C., and the police responded just as violently, if not more, than they did in Seattle. I would like to see Raphael's outrage directed here. We are creating a new movement, one that has the chance to avoid sectarian splits, authoritarian cults, and hypocritical moralizing. Let's take that chance.

David Glenn Replies

Hmmm. In my side of the exchange I thought I "was" raising the flag for self-examination, humility, and nonviolence. I regret if my essay failed to make that clear. When I sketched the circumstances under which I believe window-smashing might be legitimate, my point was that those circumstances are far, far removed from the real world of Seattle 1999—or from the typical practices of the Black Bloc anarchists. Raphael is exactly right: the idiocy and thuggery of the London May Day riots were a bad sign of where we may be heading. In Seattle and in other recent actions we've seen some long-overdue chutzpah, playfulness, and coalition-building. If we can wed those qualities to a serious agenda of reform, and if we can stave off the temptations of nihilism and violence, then we might actually build a democratic left worthy of the name.

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To be or not to be? That was Tony Blair's question this past spring when the British prime minister debated whether or not to take paternity leave after the birth of his fourth child, Leo. The fascinating thing about this question was the number of column inches it inspired in the Western press. One wonders how much the spin managers may have anticipated this and engineered mainly friendly attention for him at a time when his domestic popularity is under threat. Loss of industrial jobs, problems in transport policies, the troubles in the National Health Service and our beleaguered schools, Northern Irish anxieties, and the increasingly daft saga of the Dome exhibition—all were delightfully eclipsed by the quasi-royal treatment of the Blair baby's arrival.

Suspicions about news management are hard to sort out from other thoughts about these events. There is no doubt that such a high profile preoccupation with paternity leave is a step toward its becoming a more frequent reality. Recent improvements in the legal framework, though inadequate compared to more generous standards of paternity and maternity leave in continental Europe, have nonetheless been a move in the right direction. This generation of parents is in a different mood from previous ones. Most women work outside the home for most of their lives. The expectation that men may want to be at home more now links with the greater similarity of life trajectory between men and women. Companionate partnership and men's greater involvement in the upbringing of their children are related phenomena.

What of the disjunction between Blair's position before Leo's arrival—"This is not the sort of job one can take leave from"—and his subsequent decision to stand aside from public duties for a couple of weeks? Is this more spin, in which superman is repackaged to show a suitably tender concern for wife and baby? Certainly the carefully chosen photographs of Leo and his parents suggest this. But maybe that is over-cynical, and what we are witnessing is the emotional impact of birth being felt and acknowledged in a way that Blair had not expected. Because Mrs. Blair was widely known to want him to take time off, for once the values of family intimacy may have displaced those of the public world. It is striking to note that in the same week a woman Member of Parliament with small children attacked the House of Commons, when announcing her resignation, for being effectively an Old Boys' Club, where the realities of women's lives are excluded from consideration. She pointed out that there is a shooting gallery in the House, but no day care center.

The feminist aspect of all this has a sharp edge. It has been widely noted that unpaid parental leave means little for the poorer sections of the population. Mrs. Blair could go on working (she is a successful lawyer) until the week of the birth and plan a return to work in the knowledge that there is plenty of money to buy good domestic help and child care. Most mothers can have no such confidence, and anger about the quality and affordability of child care is bubbling. This is one area of policy to which Labour needs to give urgent attention. The political and the personal came together in the extraordinary coincidence of Mrs. Blair's arguing in court for paid leave for mothers and fathers and for British compliance with European Union practice, while revealing in public her wish for Tony to follow the Finnish prime minister's example and take time off.

Unease about the more presidential and less democratic nature of our prime minister's style and about "spin" as a crucial feature of modern politics has to be voiced alongside the fact that concerns about child care and nonmarketplace values have made it to center stage. Tony Blair may have presented himself as a man who can run the country by day and still "do the night shift," but we've seen him looking tired and changing his mind about what really could be managed. It was probably a brilliant move at the level of image, but it was also a significant incursion of reality into the political realm.

Margaret Rustin

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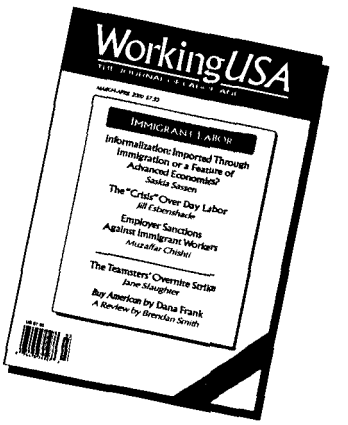
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